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THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #81, January 12 – February 9, 2006 a FREE paper for free people

With Surveillance & Spying For All...

A Cult of Presidential Power

by Tom Engelhardt

NYPD Revives the Red Squad

by Ann Schneider

NSA Spy Scandal Not So New

by Mike Burke

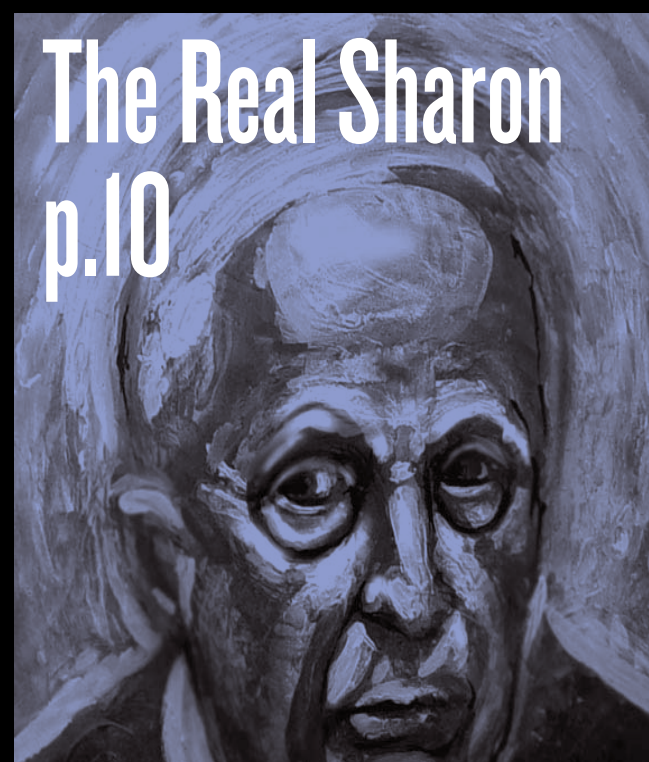
Why Alito Is Dangerous

by Amy Wolf

see p.6



DAVID HOLLENBACH



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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 120 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Indypendent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write and distribute for *The Indypendent*, video-tape events and rallies, update the web-site, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

VOLUNTEER STAFF:

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

january

THE INDYPENDENT

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Photo Team

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Video Team

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FRI JAN 13

3:30pm • FREE
FILM: WHY SHOULD THE DEVIL HAVE ALL THE GOOD MUSIC?
A documentary film about the Christian rock underground.
Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre
307 W 26th St.

8pm • \$10
SONGS OF REBELLION
Featuring: Lenny Kaye, Invert, Kenny Wollesen, Marc Ribot, Rebecca Moore, Bonfire Madigan, Hanifa Walidah, John Frazier, Jeff Lewis, Seth Tobocman (slides with music by Eric Blitz, Steve Wishnia and Emilio China) and filmmaker Jem Cohen, among others!
Issue Project Room, 400 Carroll St., btwn Bond and Nevins, Brooklyn • 718-330-0313

SUN JAN 15

2pm • FREE
Welding Workshop and Skillshare
49 E Houston btwn Mott and Mulberry

6:30pm • \$20 suggested donation, proceeds go to construction & rehab of affordable housing in New Orleans
THE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE CONTINUES: POETRY AND MUSIC
Sixth Street Community Center, 638 E 6th St. • 212-677-1863

MON JAN 16

TBA • FREE
RALLY/MARCH TO HONOR DR KING'S BIRTHDAY: Demand a living wage for all workers & justice for home health aides.
Loc & time TBA. Sponsor: 1199 SEIU.

9am • FREE
A SPECIAL MARTIN LUTHER KING CELEBRATION: "THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF MASS INCARCERATION ON FAMILIES & CHILDREN." NYS Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room C, Albany, NY. Free bus from NYC donated by Operation Prison Gap
Info/reserve: cfj@knick.net, 518-427-8361, phopkins@nycap.rr.com

6:30pm • FREE
MEETING: NY LABOR AGAINST WAR
CUNY Grad Center, 365 5th Ave., DSC Lounge, 5th Fl, R5414 (photo ID required to enter building) • nyclaw@comcast.net

WED JAN 18

6:30pm • FREE
DON'T KNOCK ME A TEAPOT:
Strange Yiddish Expressions and How They Got That Way, lecture by Michael Wexler
Mid-Manhattan Library, 455 Fifth Ave. btwn 39th and 40th Sts.

7:30-9pm • FREE
FREEGAN MEETING FOLLOWED BY TRASH TOUR. Visit supermarkets & other shops for a dumpster diving tour.
Meet at Nussbaum & Wu, Broadway at W 113th St. • ask@freegan.info

6:30-9pm • FREE
"FREE" TRADE VS. FAIR TRADE:
Petrocaribe heating oil in the South Bronx
Mothers on the Move,
928 Intervale Ave., Bronx

FRI JAN 20

9am • FREE
RALLY: BEFORE LYNNE STEWART'S SENTENCING.
Tom Paine Park, Worth & Centre Sts., US Courthouse, 40 Foley Sq.
http://www.lynnestewart.org/

7pm • \$30
PUERTO RICAN SCHOOL BENEFIT
Dinner-dance and fundraiser to provide educational materials to schools in Vieques, Puerto Rico. Music by Segunda Quimbamba and others.
Julia de Burgos Cultural Ctr., 1680 Lexington Ave. (106th St.)
Bring books/materials to donate to school libraries • 646-361-5312

7pm • FREE
ASSATA SHAKUR, THE CUBAN 5 & FILIBERTO OJEDA RIOS: STATE REPRESSION & TERRORISM
St Mary's Episcopal Church, 521 W 126th St. • 718-601-4751

SAT JAN 21

9am-2pm • FREE
FROM CITY BLOCKS TO CELL BLOCKS CONFERENCE: THE IMPACTS OF MASS INCARCERATION.
York College, 94-20 Guy R Brewer Blvd., Rm 1M07, Jamaica, Queens. • Registration required: 718-723-3653.

7pm • FREE
POETRY AND PROTEST: A CELEBRATION OF ART AND ACTIVISM with Dennis Brutus, Deepa Fernandes, Carlos Raul Dufflar & Angel Martinez and Brian Jones.
Beaver Group, 16 Beaver St., 5th Fl.



MARTIN LUTHER KING:

Beyond Vietnam – A Time to Break Silence
delivered 4 April 1967
at Riverside Church
in New York City

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

8pm • \$12
PEOPLES' VOICE CAFE: SOLIDARITY SISTERS AND GEORGE MANN & JULIUS MARGOLIN PERFORM
The Workmen's Circle, 45 E 33rd St. • 212-787-3903

SUN JAN 22

2pm • \$5
SURVEILLANCE CAMERA OUTDOOR WALKING TOUR OF CHELSEA
Intro to emerging surveillance society & selection of cameras surveying public space.
Meet at NE corner 14th St. & 8th Ave. • 212-561-0106 • SCP@notbored.org

MON JAN 23

6:30pm • FREE
READING: CHARLES FISHMAN
Author of *The Wal-Mart Effect: How the World's Most Powerful Company Really Works — and How It's Transforming the American Economy*
Coliseum Books 11 W 42nd St. • 212-803-5890

TUES JAN 24

7pm • FREE
THE EAST ASIAN CLASS STRUGGLE IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE with Loren Goldner
New SPACE Clemente Soto Velez Center, 107 Suffolk St. 2nd Fl Art Gallery • new-space@mutualaid.org

WED JAN 25

7:30pm • \$2
DOCUMENTARY:
THE LAST ABORTION CLINIC
Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St. • 212-222-0633

FRI JAN 27

All Day • Registration Required
UNITED STUDENTS AGAINST SWEAT-SHOPS ANNUAL NE REGIONAL CONFERENCE
Columbia University, Alfred Lerner Hall (116th St. campus entrance).
To register: www.studentsagainstswatshops.org

SUN JAN 29

3pm • FREE
MUSIC: Roy Brown, composer, singer & fervent believer in the cause for the independence of Puerto Rico.
Nuyorican Poet's Cafe, 236 E 3rd St. • 212-505-8183

TUES JAN 31

7pm • FREE (for students)
INEQUALITY MATTERS: A Public Forum with economists Paul Krugman, James Lardner, Meizhu Lui, Laura Flanders and others.
New School, Tishman Auditorium, 66 W 12th St. main Fl. • 212-229-5488, boxoffice@newschool.edu

Noon-2pm • FREE
"THE INTELLECTUALS & THE FLAG," Discussion with sociologist, journalist & public intellectual Todd Gitlin. Demos, 220 5th Ave, 5th Fl. • 212-633-1405 x533

SAT FEB 4

7pm • \$15/\$10 for youth and low income
Reenactment of great moments in radical history: performed by Brooklyn youth. Brooklyn Nonviolent Communication, 421 5th Ave. 2nd Fl. Park Slope, Brooklyn • 718-797-9525

LETTERS TO THE INDY

SEX OFFENDER INTERVIEW PERVERTS THE TRUTH

Just read some of your paper for the first time, and I was favorably disposed toward it BUT, I must say that I am surprised and disappointed at one article, "Helping the Hated" (Nov. 9).

This article suggests that sex offenders can never be rehabilitated, and deserve all the horror they get, including being raped or killed in prison.

Remarkably, the entire article is based upon the subjective views of just one young "psychologist" of very limited experience. She is only 26 now. She is, by her own account, psychologically scarred and damaged by the unfortunate experience she suffered when a hostile man who headed her department at university got her assigned to a job inside a prison (hard for even experienced professionals) before she had even completed her studies.

She took a job inside a maximum security prison for sex offenders only as an alternative to being

dropped from her degree program. She was at the time quite young, "very sexually inexperienced," and a virgin. She lacked the proper training. "[Interviewer]: Were you trained to deal with rapists? Alex: Absolutely not."

She was terribly traumatized by her experience. She apparently has substantial problems of adjustment to her own sexuality. "Even now it's something I need to work on. I have two older brothers who are very attractive ... Pornography has affected me in ways that I am not happy about."

Yet, based upon this very little, very personal, opinion of just one person whom we should probably not think is the best qualified to reach such a judgment, you have published an article recommending "that anyone who is found guilty of a sex crime does state time, not county time ... where 30 days will break [some of] them." And, the interviewee then recommends at least three years.

Okay, so we'll have a lot of broken people.

Your reporter, the interviewer, shows skill in elic-

iting the subject's views and her reasons. But publishing this person's "recommendations," if we may so degrade the word, on such an important and serious societal problem, seems to have been a very poor decision, whether by the reporter or the editors.

—M. Berensen
New York, NY

NICHOLAS POWERS, LITERARY POSEUR

Nicholas Power's piece entitled "Antigone Now" (Dec. 8) exposes him as a literary poseur, faux classical scholar and merchant of psychobabble. It is cruelly offensive to Cindy Sheehan, a truly remarkable activist in the most important social movement in a generation. Shame on Indymedia for publishing such gossipy observations! Rather than Cindy being uselessly middle class as Powers implied, that accusation can now be leveled at you guys!

—Hu Tynan
London

The Terrorist Worker

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

The night the subway strike was called, the TWU headquarters was crammed with TV anchors sending news to a city holding its breath. The mood was sour. NBC anchor Melissa Russo whispered loudly into her cell phone, “Who do these workers think they are, throwing a whole city into chaos if their demands aren’t met.” I knew two things, the strike was on and the media were going to make it ugly.

And ugly it was. The subway strike of 2005 can be summed up by a phrase: “Black workers are Evil Doers.” When the Transit Workers Union 100, a majority Caribbean, Latino, Asian- and African-American local, walked off the job, the corporate elite began to attack. The first target was the minds of working-class New York, and the first battle to be fought was to keep them from identifying with TWU strikers and imitating them. The media immediately fused images of criminals, terrorists and spoiled children to the picketing workers.

It began when Mayor Bloomberg said the TWU had “thuggishly turned their backs on New York.” He was quickly criticized for it. Soon, as the *New York Times* and *Village Voice* reported, on the public message board of the TWU website the mostly Black union was called monkeys and Toussaint was called Osama Bin Laden’s sweetheart.

The relentless framing of strikers as criminals continued in the *New York Post* as “Jail ’Em” was stamped over a photo of Toussaint behind bars and inside a photo of a cell on Riker’s Island.

Eventually the strikers went from crimi-



nals to terrorists. Mayor Bloomberg was relatively subtle, using the code word that the TWU had “hijacked” the city. Others went farther. Columnist Andrea Peyser wrote of the strikers, “The terrorists made it their mission to kill the economy. This brand of homegrown enemy pretends to have the city’s interest at heart while it takes aim at the most vulnerable workers.”

In a city where people walked bridges to get home after Sept. 11, to label a strike “hostage taking” and workers “terrorists” re-directs the lingering fear and rage of that day at workers. None of this is new; equating organized workers with terrorists is a standard in the Right’s repertoire. In 2004, Education Secretary Rod Paige called the largest teachers union, the National Education Association, “a terrorist organization.” In 2002, in a stand-off between the West Coast-based International Longshore and Warehouse Union and its employers, Tom Ridge, the director of Homeland Security, called union head Jim Spinosa and warned him against striking, saying it would threaten national security.

Yet if workers are also citizens, how do

they threaten their own nation’s security? This only makes sense if national security is defined by the profit margin of the corporate class. During the strike, our class divisions opened up, but the corporate media stitched them together with racially coded coverage. In the case of the TWU, a non-white union, tabloids implicitly invoked the difference between legal citizenship and cultural citizenship by equating transit workers with Al-Qaeda.

The corporate class was faced with an internal enemy, the workers whose interest in pay and benefits clashes with the capitalists’ interest in profit. Yet the rightwing media depicted it as a struggle within labor. Usually in the tabloids, members of the working class appear as characters in titillating crime stories. This time, they were cast as victims of a criminal strike by a selfish union.

“It’s not the way I want to get to work,” said a one-legged man lurching across the Brooklyn Bridge. The *New York Post* showed him bundled in yellow coat, gripping his crutches. He doubled as a symbol of a city crippled by the TWU strike and an alibi for the right.

The non-union working class has been hobbling for years since Sept. 11 as rising rents and falling wages have made the city too expensive to live in. But during the subway strike they finally got love as the *New York Post*, *Daily News*, the *New York Times* and the major news channels placed a halo of victimization on stranded workers. TV anchors wielding microphones amplified the stories of ruined Christmas, tired feet and children with no gifts to open.

Working-class New York appeared in the media as innocent victims of a selfish strike by greedy union workers. Yet in a reversal that approaches the absurd, the fact that missing a few days of work makes them vulnerable to real poverty does not add to an argument against unions but shows the very real need for them.

The final image of the strikers was of spoiled children pouting for undeserved gifts. In essence they were accused of being brats unable to control their appetites in the service of the greater good. It is an image that contradicts the very goal of the strike, which was about pensions, the ability to live decently in one’s old age.

Implicit in this last attack on the striker as spoiled children is a whole system of undeclared beliefs, the invisible ideology that supports capital. If the value of human life is determined by the labor it can sell, if we aren’t working to make a surplus profit for others, we are uselessly rotting, like fruit on a tree. The image of spoiled workers is in silent dialogue with Billie Holiday’s anti-lynching song, “Strange Fruit,” a ballad about the lynching of blacks whom whites could not totally control, a violence it took our media only three days of a strike to begin justifying.

Transit strike aftermath

TWU Victory Stuns Both Left and Right

BY A.K. GUPTA

The transit workers strike was a monumental victory. Abandoned by their international, with the staggering weight of the political establishment, the judiciary, the corporate press and much of the public against them, the TWU faced down threats of jail and massive fines, plus warnings the union would be busted, and won.

After the strike ended on Dec. 22, the scuttlebutt was that TWU President Roger Toussaint had sold out the workers. But when Toussaint announced a deal on Dec. 27, many gasped in surprise that not only had the union beaten back the MTA’s demand to raise the retirement age from 55 to 62, the TWU also got as much as \$200 million in pension overpayments returned to workers.

While many New Yorkers backed the TWU’s fight for decent pay and dignity, others have been so beaten down that they resented the fact that working people could make a living wage with job security and a pension to boot.

The transit workers showed the power of solidarity. They called the cynical bluff of a billionaire mayor, a corrupt governor and their appointees at the MTA. In a dramatic turnaround, it’s the ruling elite that is now

divided, arguing over the contract’s details and whether it should be approved.

In an era when the media tell us the only class left is the investing class, the TWU showed that workers not only have some fight, they have a collective power that can take capital on – even if only for a moment – and win.

Interestingly, many leftists have been unable to recognize it as a victory. Some have been sniping about the TWU agreeing to have workers contribute 1.5 percent of their wages toward health care. Others seem disappointed that the walkout lasted barely 60 hours, having taken glee in seeing the city shut down.

The nyc.indymedia.org website offers a telling case study. Leading up to the strike and during it there were around 100 articles and comments posted to the website about all aspects of the strike. When the TWU went back to work without a contract, one poster to the website called Toussaint a sell-out. Yet once the terms of the deal were announced, there was virtual silence.

Perhaps because the left has suffered so many defeats during the last 30 years, many have a hard time realizing that victories are still possible. At the same time, it’s an overstatement to label the strike a historical turning point; it’s another skirmish between capital and labor. But this is an undeniable victory that should be savored.

Direct Action Gets the Goods

To just about everyone’s surprise, TWU not only went out on strike and survived, but it more than held its own at the collective bargaining table.

Wins:

- Annual pay increases of 3, 4 and 3.5 percent.
- Somewhere between \$100-200 million in refunds for 20,000 workers who paid the old, higher rate of pension contribution.
- Maternity leave.
- Paid Martin Luther King Day holiday.
- Beat back demands to raise the retirement age from 55 to 62.
- Beat back demands to raise pension contributions from 2 to 6 percent for new workers.
- Blocked MTA demands for productivity concessions.

Losses:

- The union agreed to contribute 1.5 percent of wages toward health care premiums – setting a potential precedent for municipal unions and costing workers at least \$25 million a year.
- TWU and individual workers are likely to face fines in the millions of dollars for striking under the anti-union Taylor law – the final amount is yet to be determined.
- TWU agreed to a 37-month contract that expires in January rather than a 36-month contract that ends in December, preventing another holiday shutdown and possibly weakening its bargaining power. Then again, it might not. A subway shutdown in January is potentially even worse for business – if not shopping – than one in December.

—MATT WASSERMAN

Pickets Get Personal

BY BENNETT BAUMER

When the spring semester at New York University begins on Jan. 17, several hundred striking graduate student workers will be back on the picket line. The fall semester ended with a series of large demonstrations by the Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC).

The conflict has turned increasingly personal. At the end of the semester, GSOC members changed tactics and cut back picket lines to focus on leafletting and picketing NYU events. On Dec. 19, striking graduate students handed out fliers and temporarily disrupted NYU President John Sexton's address by unfurling a banner at a NYU town hall meeting. Sexton had earlier announced at an August town hall meeting that NYU would not negotiate a second contract with the graduate student worker union. When the graduate students began chanting, on cue, a pack of meaty NYU security guards burst into the meeting from a back hallway.

"What you are seeing is what happens in a community of ideas when you enter an organization of mistrust," said Sexton, as GSOC members tried to drown him out.

Sexton was noticeably agitated by the graduate students; his voice strained and his face reddened when audience members asked him about alleged surveillance by security guards. Graduate students at the meeting claimed that the guards had photographed students picketing in front of Bobst Library. When the strike began in November, faculty became angry when administrators signed on to "the blackboard" as instructors. The blackboard is an online communication system and forum for professors and students.

Sexton said any allegation of surveillance by the university was "charged" and that "to my knowledge, there is no surveillance."

While NYU administrators stressed that the town hall meeting was an open forum for dialogue, many in the audience felt they were shut out. About half of those who attended were worried that NYU expansion into the Village would further destroy the character of the area. NYU plans to build a 26-story dorm on 12th Street, between Third and Fourth Avenues. During questioning, one Village resident shouted from the back, "This is an entirely fraudulent presentation!"

When classes begin later this month, GSOC members have promised a loud and raucous rally to kick things off. Also, professors will be moving classes off campus and grades from last semester "have been seriously compromised because people who were supposed to be doing instruction, were not," according to GSOC spokeswoman Susan Valentine. She said many classes were converted to pass/fail. Graduate student workers are resolved to see the dispute out, but the strike has put a strain on them.

"It's a stressful situation for strikers and non-strikers to interact," said Holly Lewis, one of two MFA students on strike in the Creative Writing department. "I'm outside striking for [non-striking grad students'] conditions, and they are the ones afraid to lose their jobs."



NYU GRAD STUDENT STRIKERS plan a large rally for the first week of Spring Semester. *PHOTO: Antrim Caskey*

Voting Veracity

New Yorkers question the reliability of electronic ballots

BY ERIN THOMPSON

As the implementation deadline for the "Help America Vote Act" (HAVA) and the 2006 elections near, more than a thousand concerned citizens in Rochester, N.Y. attended a demonstration of electronic voting machines on Jan. 5.

Avery Beer, who was present at the event, told *The Independent* that he "realized the crucial necessity for verified elections" after serving as a poll worker in New Mexico during the 2004 presidential election. As part of the Election Protection coalition, he monitored a precinct using touch-screen machines without a paper trail.

"We had a small handful of people who came out, very upset," he said. "When they pushed the final button, they realized that their vote had been changed." Without a paper trail, according to Beer, the votes were essentially lost.

States have reported that electronic voting equipment supplied by companies such as Diebold, Election Systems and Software (ES & S) and Sequoia Voting Systems have dropped or changed votes, with unverifiable results, and that they are prone to electronic hacking and manipulation.

Prior to the 2004 presidential election, Diebold CEO Walden O'Dell trumpeted his commitment "to helping Ohio 111 deliver its electoral votes to the President." Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and former CEO of ES & S, won his seat against an incumbent Democratic governor in a landslide victory in which electronic voting machines were widely used. Diebold and ES & S machines currently perform 80 percent of the nation's vote tallying.

Passed in October 2002, HAVA bans not only the type of voting machines used in the 2000 election's "hanging chad" fiasco, but the lever machines used in New York City as well. The legislation allocated billions of dollars to states to replace such machines, to complete a computerized central database of voter registrations, to allow for disability access in one polling station in every precinct, and to require new identification standards for voters.

Years of inaction

In New York state, individual counties are responsible for buying and implementing systems compatible with HAVA and NYS Election Board standards. After months of public hearings that ended only last month and four years of inaction by state legislators, counties are currently undergoing a 45-day comment period, during which members of the public can review options from vendors and give feedback about which machines the state election commission should certify.

"According to New York state legislation, each [county] board of election commission will make the decision [on equipment]; that will only happen after the state certifies this equipment," said Peter Quinn, Republican co-commissioner of Monroe County, where Rochester is located. That could put the final decision on new equipment anywhere between February and April.

The analysis and choice of voting equipment is made all the more difficult for counties, when the equipment proposed doesn't meet HAVA or NYS standards, or have provable track records of accuracy or transparency.

"I think both commissioners feel that the mechanical lever systems have served us well. [They] have set the bar for [being] safe, secure, simple," said Quinn.

The seven voting machines tested at the Monroe County

demonstration were produced by four vendors — Sequoia Voting Systems, ES & S, Danaher Controls and Liberty Election Systems — and represented variations on two kinds of ballot recording devices. Five devices presented were direct recording electronic (DRE) machines, which allow voters to choose from a list of candidates presented on a touch screen. The two optical-scan machines read a paper ballot resembling a standardized test form filled out by the voter.

Where's the paper trail?

"[Of] the two vendors that are the most popular in New York state — Sequoia and Liberty — neither can demonstrate voter verified paper trail," said Bo Lipari, director of New Yorkers for Verified Voting, a voter advocacy group that supports the optical scanner option.

According to Lipari, who is also a professional software engineer with more than 20 years experience, the impossibility of writing error-free software, the inability to test the security of software used by voting technology vendors, and the fact that "we don't know how to verify that the software that is verified is running" makes the DRE models a dangerous prospect. With the optical scanner, Lipari says, "we've got 11 that original record of voter's intent that the computer hasn't intervened with in any way."

However, while optical scanners have been favored by voter advocacy groups, the state of California has refused to approve the use of both touch-screen and optical-scanning voting equipment made by Diebold after it was shown that memory cards implanted in the

>> None of them could guarantee security.

[The companies] don't want to give up rights to code, they don't want to give state access to software <<

machines could change the results of an election.

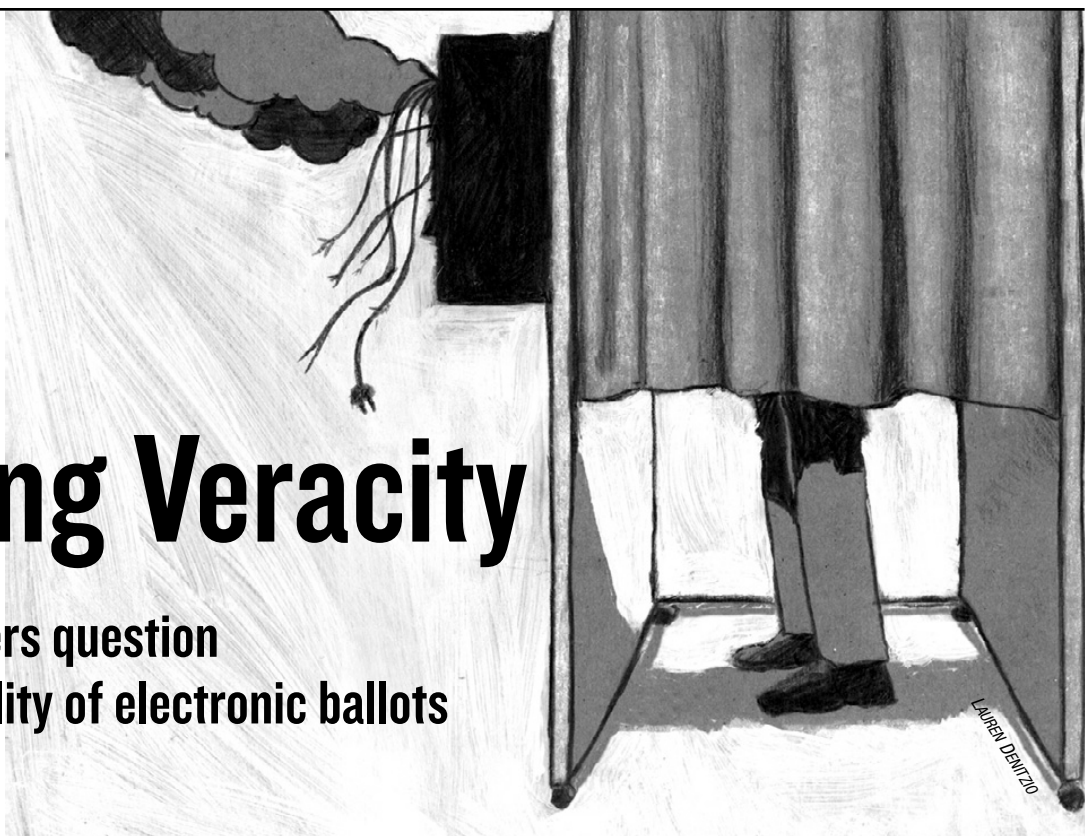
Monroe County resident Jason Nabewaniec cited positive aspects for all of the models, but said, "None of them could guarantee security; [the companies] don't want to give up rights to code, don't want to give state access to software." Nabewaniec also pointed out that many of the models tested aren't built, yet paper-ballot functionality is promised to be added at a later date.

According to Sally Brown of the Rochester-based coalition Every Vote Counts, when voters questioned vendors about disability accessories and paper ballots, "they would say things like: 'Well, we didn't bring that.'"

If counties are unable to certify the new machines and implement the necessary training and education programs in advance of the 2006 elections, it could be another year before New Yorkers see new voting equipment. "I think [a delay] is likely to happen," said Lipari. "We're simply so far behind the curve."

New York wouldn't be the first state to delay implementation. On Jan. 5, Connecticut decided to defy the federal mandate and to continue using lever-system machines until equipment that meets HAVA guidelines can be approved. Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz stated that the decision came partly from the realization that promises of a HAVA-compatible system by vendors were not realized.

As for Quinn, he is noncommittal about whether Monroe County will be able to meet the 2006 deadline. "Our interpretation of federal HAVA legislation [is that] the goal is to meet deadlines of implementation," he said. "[However] we do not have control over certification, manufacturing."



People Power Vs. Disaster Capitalism in New Orleans

BY LAUREL SUTHERLIN

NEW ORLEANS—This city has become a surreal and deeply inspiring hell; a site of post-apocalyptic devastation where racial, cultural and political relations are nuanced, richly counter-intuitive and so unexpectedly jumbled that the prospect of change lingers in the air like a late afternoon thundershower.

The scale of the destruction is impossible to grasp until you have seen it – more than 100,000 cars lie in all manner of disarray; on curbs, upside down, in front lawns and – perhaps most eerily – parked right where they were left when their drivers suddenly fled more than four months ago. There are currently 1.3 million households from the Gulf Coast still residing elsewhere. Bodies are still found every day. Vast areas sit festering, power lines strewn across streets, trees sliced right through houses, two-story homes crushed to the height of their front door. Tens of thousands of homes are filled with rotting furniture, warped floors and swollen drywall. With New Orleanians discouraged from returning home by military blockades, curfews, and the perception that everything is destroyed, the city feels like a ghost town.

Finding Common Ground

Amid this desolation, a remarkable organizing effort has taken root. The Common Ground Collective was formed the week after the hurricane by a group of courageous locals and their regional activist allies who initially armed themselves to defend black neighborhoods from roving white vigilantes who were shooting at young black men. Out of that war-zone atmosphere has grown an organic crisis response team that has diversified and grown extremely quickly into a sophisticated grassroots organization with more than a half-dozen semi-permanent locations and 30-some programs ranging from health care clinics, distribution centers, a pirate radio station, legal advocacy teams, and now house-gutting crews. Hundreds of volunteers from around the country have trekked to the Lower Ninth Ward, the devastated east New Orleans neighborhood where Common Ground is based, and pitched in.



COMMON GROUND: Medical volunteers care for New Orleans residents. PHOTO: CGC

Shortly after arriving with a bus full of volunteers from southern Oregon, I started working with a house-gutting crew. Every house in New Orleans has a spray-painted ‘X’ on the front of it somewhere – with four squares indicating what agency assessed it, what date it was visited, how many, if any, bodies were found inside and other notes like “cat under house” etc. One neighborhood we worked in had the ‘X’s painted on the roofs because boats visited them when the water was two stories high. Each house is full of poignant images; a rusty chandelier hanging in the center of an empty room, a musty attic full of bedding, bullet shells and stale bread where a family was forced to live for days before being rescued. Moldy marriage certificates and ancient cloth wallpaper hidden in walls from an era ago. Mardi Gras beads in every other shovel scoop. The work is brutal and tedious, but the progress a small group of hard workers can make in a day is impressive.

Racism unleashed

The racism of local, state and federal government is maddening and impossible to overstate. All the paraphernalia of the police state is on display and primarily pointed at the

city’s African-American population. I saw countless convoys of military police, police officers from LA, New York and elsewhere, corporate mercenaries on contract from Blackwater and on and on and on, but never a single official from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the city of New Orleans. Halliburton is being paid \$3,000 a house on a no-bid contract to put tarps on leaky roofs, while the homeless and destitute owners and residents of those homes are shunned.

White neighborhoods are being cleaned and the power re-installed and residents given trailers to live in on their lot while they rebuild. In adjacent Black areas with the same level of damage, it looks like it did the day the water receded – no lights, no clean up, no people. In the upscale French Quarter and downtown, businesses and restaurants are largely open.

City leaders are working to pass a law to make it illegal to gut houses or help residents repair their homes in areas the city deems condemned and the city may use eminent domain to give pennies on the dollar to homeowners and forcibly give title of their property to developers. Everything is in

upheaval. Competing models of recovery are articulating themselves as they accelerate toward a possible head-on collision that could be very, very ugly.

Will New Orleans be rebuilt on a people-centered model of neighbor helping neighbor, local groups funded and empowered to respond to the needs and wishes of residents? Or will a top-down, corporate profit-driven decree be imposed on an already suffering and oppressed people through economic apartheid and brutal state violence?

Seeds of hope

I could go on telling tales that outrage and frustrate, but depression and anger are not what I want to convey – because truly that is not the way it feels to be here. The city is vibrant, and its people are amazing. Daily interactions are poignant and intimate – there is a raw humanity on display here that is heartening and affirming.

There are also major openings for innovative, visionary solutions and the seeds of those projects are already flourishing. The Common Ground Collective, some of the churches and other community organizations seem like the nitrogen-fixing plants returning to a hillside after a landslide has wiped the old life away. They are making it habitable for the next wave of residents to return. There lives a real possibility that New Orleans will become a proving ground where social justice and sustainability can merge into a model of major relevance to us all. People are being pulled here from all over the country, and within the seething chaos of it all is an electrified sense that something big is birthing here – a movement congealing from disparate directions – an invention of necessity that is addressing issues rapidly becoming universal. Out of the greatest darkness comes the greatest light. Perhaps New Orleans will soon sow the seeds of something better, just as it is now shining a spotlight on the open wounds of our broken, suicidal society.

For more info, see: 02collective.org and commongroundrelief.org

Safety violations are ignored; more mining disasters likely in West Virginia

King Coal: Out of Control

TEXT AND PHOTO BY ANTRIM CASKEY

The Sago mine disaster that recently took the lives of 12 men and has left one man struggling to live rocked West Virginia. It deserves our attention. Sago is only the most recent disaster in this state forgotten by most, riddled with corporate, regulatory and federal corruption that’s killing coal miners who are some of the most hard-working people in the land.

Thus far, it looks like these miners at Sago were killed by the negligence of the mine’s owner, International Coal Group (ICG). In 2005, ICG incurred \$24,000 in fines for 202 violations at the Sago mine but did nothing. It is cheaper for coal companies to pay the fines than to fix the dangers they create.

In Sundial, W. Va. – on the other side of the state from Sago – the Goals Coal Preparation Plant is another disaster waiting to happen.

As I have reported in past editions of *The Independent*, Marsh Fork Elementary School sits directly beneath the Goals plant, which con-

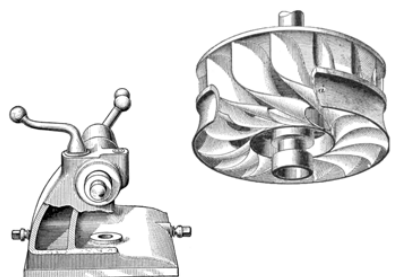
tains a coal-processing plant, a 2.8 billion-gallon coal sludge dam and coal storage silos all adjacent to the Edwight mountaintop removal site. Like the Sago mine, Goals has been charged with “significant and substantial” violations. In 2005, the Goals plant (mine ID# 4605317) incurred 46 violations, for which the company was assessed a mere \$4,662 in fines, according to the Mine Health and Safety Administration website. The dam has been shown to be unstable and leaking. If it bursts, the results could be horrific. Do we have to wait until 233 schoolchildren drown in toxic coal sludge before something is done?

Coal mining in Appalachia is not just killing people in accidents like Sago. The coal industry, aided and abetted by the Bush administration, is also steamrolling over any potential impediment on its path of greed. Mountaintop removal coal mining is destroying the most diverse forest ecosystem in the nation, thousands of miles of mountain streams, unique flora and fauna and the culture of a people who’ve lived there for generations – all for a lump of coal.



Coal fields, Raleigh County, W.V.

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DELEGATE ZERO, aka Subcomandante Marcos, crisscrosses Mexico to conduct a campaign "from below, for below." PHOTO: CHIAPAS.INDYMEDIA.ORG

Zapatistas Launch 'Other' Campaign

BY RAMOR RYAN

CHIAPAS, Mexico—Like a cross between Mad Max and Zorro, Subcomandante Marcos zoomed out of the remote Zapatista stronghold of La Garrucha on a black motorbike with EZLN blazed across its handlebars and a cock hanging off the back. As the gathered scrum of media scrambled to capture the dramatic exit and beginning of the new Zapatista political initiative, all they were left with was a cloud of dust and the fading squawk of the unfortunate chicken — the campaign mascot called "Penguin" for its lopsided appearance — riding pillion.

The infamous guerrilla commander, a kind of postmodern Che Guevara, was on the road again. Somewhere outside San Cristobal, reporters caught up with him and asked was he really going to campaign on this motorcycle. "All the way to Tijuana" he replied.

Under the moniker Delegate Zero, Marcos launches a six-month tour of Mexico, unarmed and apparently alone, not to speak or run for office, but "to listen to the simple and humble people who struggle." This new political initiative, called the Other Campaign, is intended to influence Mexico's July presidential election.

Rejecting the suggestion that they were leaving the armed struggle and entering the political mainstream, the Zapatistas say they are reaching out to anti-capitalist and leftist organizations across the country, and conducting a campaign "from below, for below," focusing on "a radical transformation of the Mexican political system."

A Tumultuous Night

Flight from the Zapatista lair in the Lacandon Jungle — the Desert of Solitude of colonial literature fame — was, for Marcos, brief. Eighty miles away, some 15,000 Zapatistas and supporters heralded his arrival in San Cristobal. Amid the impassioned welcome, Marcos — joined by the other Zapatista comandantes — surfed through the multitude occupying a town center completely deserted of police and military.

Rapturous applause greeted Marcos as he took to the platform. An unlikely hero, he bowed his masked head and characteristically mumbled his words.

"I have been chosen to go out across the country to test the road and to see what dangers lie there within, and to recognize who by their face and word is down with the struggle. So that we can unite the Zapatista struggle with the struggle of the farmers and the workers of the country called Mexico."

The Long Road

It's been 12 years since the Zapatistas exploded onto the world stage with the 1994 armed uprising, and four years since the unarmed "Zapatour" across the nation. That tour brought out millions of supporters, but no resolution to the conflict as proposed legislation for indigenous autonomy died in Congress. Frustrated by the lack of progress, the Zapatistas fell into a silence and concentrated on building local autonomy in their zones of influence.

This led to the creation of 32 autonomous municipalities that refused to accept any state presence. They set about organizing health and education services, as well as overseeing the implementation of justice and social welfare measures, through a system of participatory democracy and assembly-based council communalism.

Despite heavy repression from the state, Zapatista guns remained silent during the low-intensity conflict. This strategy led to the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, which spelt out their political philosophy as distinctly anti-capitalist, against parliamentary democracy and in favor of direct or participatory democracy, as exemplified by their autonomous municipalities.

The Sixth Declaration also laid out a non-violent strategy to critique and organize against the unequal, unjust and corrupt political system permeating Mexico.

In answer to the ever prevalent question posed by Lenin a hundred years ago — What is to be done? — the Zapatistas subtly rephrase it: What do we want to do? And the answer is "to reorganize the nation from below and to the left."

For their part, political parties and the establishment have chosen to focus on the apparent abandoning of arms instead of the political issues raised by the Other Campaign.

"It's a good thing that they have left behind the armed struggle," said Cardinal Rivera Carrera, head of Mexico's conservative Catholic Church.

The outgoing ruling party PAN has also welcomed the new Zapatista initiative, but elements within the right-wing, neoliberal party, such as Congress leader Hector Larios, dismiss the campaign as "surreal and clown-like." The center-left PRD — favorites in the poll to win the upcoming elections — are adopting a conciliatory tone despite much of Marcos stringent criticisms directed at their own neoliberal drift.

The PRI, who ruled the country for 70 years straight, is running a close second place to the PRD in the polls. Sinister elements within the ex-dictatorship are the ones to be wary of. They are the intellectual authors of the 1997 Acteal massacre of 45 people in a church, and the assassination of the reforming Presidential candidate Luis Colosio, in 1994.

Marcos has dwelt on the possibility of his own assassination as he goes about the country.

"We don't fear to die struggling. The good word has already been planted in fertile soil. This fertile soil is in the heart of all of you, and it is there that Zapatista dignity flourishes."

Town Hall Meetings

Hundreds of delegates from some of the 443 social organizations and NGOs that subscribe to the Other Campaign packed out the first series of town hall meetings held in San Cristobal on Jan. 2.

Marcos, masked and flanked by an unarmed civilian bodyguard, introduced the encounter. "It's necessary to hold public meetings but not the type of the old politics where one speaks and the rest applaud." In this sense, he proposed to differentiate the Other Campaign from the "electoral circus."

Speaking from the floor, Fr. Miguel Concha Fray Francisco de Vitoria Human Rights Centre, explained how this new campaign was not a stunt to influence July elections, but a renewal of nationwide grassroots political organizing.

"It's not an anti-campaign. This is another campaign that goes beyond the electoral consensus: it's something focused on the medium or long term."

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Bolivia's Election Stunner

BY JIM SHULTZ

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia—On Dec. 18, Evo Morales was elected President of Bolivia with a 54 percent majority, the first modern Bolivian president to ever do so, or even come close.

Headline writers in the foreign press have had a field day trying to pin a label on Morales' surprise victory. The New York Times announced the victory of a "coca farmer". The Chicago Sun-Times abbreviated Morales as a "leftist". CNN picked up a campaign rally declaration in which Morales called himself, the US government's "nightmare". But what does the election of Morales to the presidency here really mean?

Rejection of the Washington Consensus

First and foremost it means that the Bolivian people, across class lines and regions, are demanding a reversal of twenty years of market-crazed economic policies pressed on the country from abroad, and by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in particular. Growing coca leaves was not the issue in these elections. Recovering national control over gas and oil, privatized away at bargain prices in the 1990s, that was the issue.

Nearly six years after the people of Cochabamba took to the streets to take back their water from the Bechtel Corporation of San Francisco (a privatization done under pressure from the World Bank), the nationwide voices of protest for economic change found their voice on the ballot through Evo Morales. In his victory speech he told cheering supporters, "We will change the economic models that have blocked development for the people." That change begins with Morales' plans to take back control of the nation's vast gas and oil reserves and renegotiate all the nation's contracts with foreign oil companies.

Economic foolishness? Joseph Stiglitz, the economic Nobel laureate and former chief economist at the World Bank didn't think so when he spoke with the *New York Times* Magazine in November. "They could do it," he said, noting that other oil companies would gladly negotiate new deals on better terms.

The Rise of Bolivia's Indigenous Majority

Second, Morales' victory represents the rising of the country's Indian majority into power. Last night, speaking to the nation's Quechua and Aymara people he said, with clear pride, "For the first time we are the president."

I saw that indigenous identification with Morales up close in October when I spent five days in a small Quechua Indian village three hours off into the mountains. On a sunny afternoon I sat with the village leader, Lucio, a man I have known for almost a decade. I asked him if the coming elections were big on people's minds. "No, we are really more worried about whether it will rain soon." I asked him if people were excited about Evo Morales and the prospect of electing an Indian as president. "Well, he is really just a politician." Then I asked him whether the people of the village would vote. "Oh yes, we



ON THE MOVE: Evo Morales (third from left) leads a demonstration for nationalization of oil and gas reserves. PHOTO: *Indymedia.org*

will vote. All 400 of us will walk together 45 minutes to the place where we vote and we will all vote for Evo."

And on election day, Bolivians by the millions marched distances short and far to give Morales the biggest mandate of any president here in half a century.

The Risks Ahead

There are risks to be sure. The people who I have worked with here as activists for many years are suddenly Senators and Congress members. They are good people but, like Morales, they are likely to underestimate how hard it is to actually govern. The dance with foreign donors, including the US, will be difficult but essential, with Bolivia dependent on foreign aid for a huge portion of its annual budget. The economic plans that Morales and his backers have in mind, important as they are, will also prove difficult. Putting twenty years of economic toothpaste back in the tube is no easy task.

In addition, any political victory, especially a big one, is a recipe for disaster in itself. It makes people think that their public support will endure. It invites recklessness. One need only look to Arnold Schwarzenegger's recent ego-driven rise and fall in California to see the process on display. And in Bolivia, public discontent doesn't just mean people turn against you at the polls. In Bolivia it means they block the streets. It means they chant for your downfall and sometimes win it.

Morales takes office with far fewer expectations than he may think and with public expectations that will be virtually impossible to meet. Already some social movement leaders have given him just three months to take strong action on retaking the nation's gas and oil and in convening the long-awaited constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution.

Again, an Example for All of Us

But for now, Morales and his backers, and the Bolivian people along with them, have won a victory that is both sweet and historic. When I first moved back to Bolivia in 1998 the country was governed by Hugo Banzer, a former dictator. World Bank and IMF economics was the rule of the day. Beginning Jan. 22,

Evo's Victory Tour

Evo Morales's first stop after winning the Bolivian presidency? Havana. Then it was onto Caracas to meet with Hugo Chavez, cementing the alliance of leftist leaders. While Cuba promised medical scholarships for 5,000 Bolivian students and assistance with a national literacy campaign, Chavez said Venezuela would supply Bolivia with 150,000 barrels of diesel fuel per month in exchange for Bolivian agricultural products.

"These agreements we have signed are for life, for humanity, they are not a crime, even though they might be for the United States," said Morales. Taking a jab at the Bush administration, Chavez proclaimed that "we are creating the axis of good, the new axis, the axis of the new century."

—JOHN TARLETON

Bolivia will be governed by a man who earned his political stripes confronting Banzer and others in the streets and the market fundamentalism forced on Bolivian from abroad will begin to be dismantled piece by piece.

Bolivians have succeeded remarkably in declaring what kind of country they don't want. Now the challenge is to build, in a practical and sustainable way, the country that they do want. I think there is a decent chance that they'll pull it off. If they do they will set, once again, an example for all of us - that what's possible in the world is often more than what we think.

Jim Shultz is the executive director of the Democracy Center (democracyctr.org) and author of The Democracy Owners' Manual. He has lived in Bolivia since 1998.

World briefs

VENEZUELA, BOLIVIA...PERU?

Left-nationalist candidate Ollanta Humala is leading by a slim margin in recent polls on the April 2006 Peruvian Presidential race, leaving him likely to end up in a runoff for the Presidency. Humala was called a "Quixote" by Hugo Chavez in a Jan. 3 meeting with Chavez and Morales in Caracas, where both men endorsed his candidacy--causing Peru to withdraw its ambassador from Venezuela due to Chavez's "meddling" in Peruvian politics. Humala, a former army officer, first become known for leading a failed non-violent military uprising against the government of disgraced former President Alberto Fujimori during 2000. While his political platform remains vague, Humala has called for greater taxation of foreign energy companies and limits on foreign direct investments..



Port-Au-Prince, Haiti PHOTO: AP

CRISIS IN HAITI CONTINUES

Haiti's elections were postponed for a fourth time in early January, allegedly due to out-of-control violence, with a new date of Feb. 7 being set. On Jan. 7, senior UN Military Commander in Haiti General Urano Bacellar, tasked with establishing order, was found dead in his hotel room, apparently of suicide.

CHINA BEGINS TO DUMP DOLLAR

On Jan. 5, China issued a declaration that it would be searching for better investment opportunities and putting less money in United States currency, while remaining non-committal about whether it would channel freed-up funds into U.S. corporate bonds, alternate currencies such as the euro, commodities such as oil or other options. Regardless, most analysts think that this move will further the trend towards a gentle rise in the value of the Chinese yuan against the dollar. Many analysts think that this announcement is an initial move in a withdrawal by China from their effective financing of the United States' steadily increasing deficits. China currently puts about 70 percent of Central Bank holdings into United States currency, with holdings estimated at over \$800 billion.

11 MILLION AFRICANS NEAR STARVATION

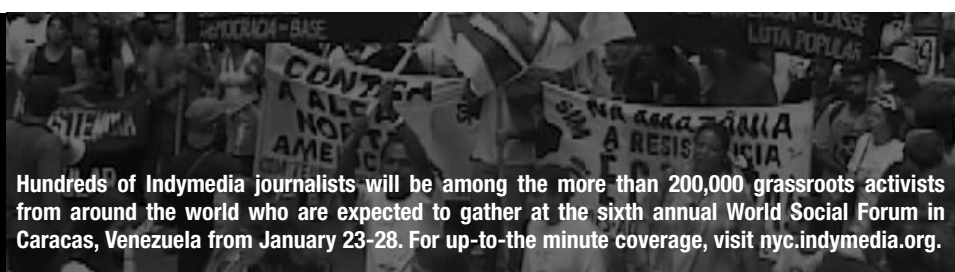
The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization said in Rome on Jan. 6 that more than 11 million people in Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia are "on the brink of starvation" due to recent severe droughts coupled with the effects of past and ongoing conflicts. Food shortages are particularly grave in Somalia, where about 64,000 tons of food aid are needed until June 2006; so far, only 16,700 tons are available.

WINTER IS LATE, BUT HARSH IN N. PAKISTAN

Winter in northern Pakistan has come late but with a vengeance, unleashing rain, cold and snow on people already suffering after a devastating Oct. 8 earthquake, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in early January. The cold wave plunged nighttime temperatures below zero. Recent storms caused refugees' tents to collapse under the weight of heavy snowfalls, while a few refugee camps were flooded by relentless rain. UNHCR is operating 139 earthquake relief camps.



A Kashmiri earthquake survivor carries his son. PHOTO: REUTERS



Hundreds of Indymedia journalists will be among the more than 200,000 grassroots activists from around the world who are expected to gather at the sixth annual World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela from January 23-28. For up-to-the minute coverage, visit nyc.indymedia.org.

Ariel Sharon's Life of Crime

"You can call me anything you like. Call me a monster or a murderer,"

Ariel Sharon said in a notorious 1982 interview with the Israeli writer Amos Oz. "Even today I am willing to volunteer to do the dirty work for Israel, to kill as many Arabs as necessary, to deport them, to expel and burn them, to have everyone hate us." As it turns out, Sharon had a lot more "dirty work" ahead of him. Here are some of the milestones in Sharon's epic half-century military and political career that mirrors the history of modern Israel.

1948 At the age of 20, Sharon heads an infantry company in the war that established Israeli independence. The U.N. Conciliation Commission estimates 720,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes.

1953 Sharon founds and leads Unit 101, Israel's first special forces unit. Unit 101 attacks villages that allegedly played host to Palestinian militants. An attack on the West Bank village of Qibya in October 1953 leaves more than 60 civilians dead and most homes razed. The United States condemns the attack, saying that those responsible "should be held to account."

1956 A brigade commander in the Suez War, Sharon leads an unauthorized attack against Militia Pass in Sinai. Several subordinates claim years later that Sharon had tried to provoke Egyptian forces, sending out scouts with the aim of drawing fire and starting a battle. More than 40 Israeli soldiers died at Militia Pass. According to a 1995 story in the London *Daily Telegraph*, units led by Sharon and Rafael Etyan executed 273 Egyptian prisoners of war and Sudanese civilian workers during the Suez War, dumping them in mass graves.

1969-73 Leads Southern Command of IDF, which carries out the task of "pacifying" the Gaza Strip. According to a 2001 story in the UK *Independent*: "in August 1971 alone, troops under Mr. Sharon's command destroyed 2,000 homes in the Gaza Strip, uprooting 12,000 people... In the second half of 1971, 104 Palestinian militants were killed."

1973 Resigns from the IDF to join the Knesset as a member of the rightist Likud Party.

1977-81 Serving as minister of agriculture, Sharon doubles the Jewish "agricultural settlements" in the West Bank and Gaza. From 1977 to 1981, more than 25,000 new settlers move into the Occupied Territories.

1981 Appointed minister of defense.

1982 Launches invasion of Lebanon, which results in the death of 20,000 civilians. *Haretz* reporter Uzi Benziman later claims that Sharon "deceived" Prime Minister Manachem Begin about the purpose of the war and extended it without authorization. In September 1982, as many as 3,000 Palestinians (estimates vary) are killed in Lebanese refugee camps by Maronite Christian militias during the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Israeli forces under Sharon's command provide logistical support to the militias and surround the camps.

1983 The Israeli Kahan Commission finds that Sharon bore "personal responsibility" for the massacres. Sharon is removed from his position as minister of defense.

1993 Votes "No" to the Oslo agreement.

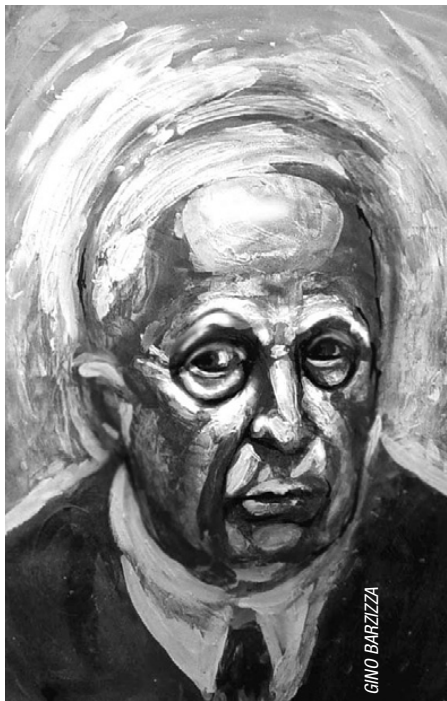
1998 According to *Agence France Presse*, Sharon tells a far-right audience that "everybody has to move, run and grab as many hilltops as possible to enlarge the settlements because everything we take now will stay ours..."

2000 Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem plays a key role in sparking the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

2002 Now Prime Minister, Sharon launches a series of "incursions" into the West Bank during April. The Israeli Army occupies most cities, razes downtown Jenin and kills hundreds. Israeli forces loot and ransack government buildings, effectively destroying the ability of Palestinian civil society to govern itself.

2002-05 Sharon's government constructs the "Apartheid Wall." Extending Israel well beyond the 1967 borders, the wall will encompass approximately seven percent of the West Bank and a greater percentage of its farmable land and water resources, leaving many Palestinian villages without means to support themselves. The remaining Palestinian areas will be separated from each other into cantons, enclaves and "military zones" while nearly 16 percent of Palestinians living in the West Bank will be in Israeli territory and likely faced with expulsion. The wall reaches up to 8 meters (26 feet) in height and will run for several hundred miles.

BY MATT WASSERMAN AND JOHN TARLETON



BY YONI MISHAL

TEL AVIV—If Ariel Sharon ran for prime minister today, at the age of 78, from his deathbed, he would still win by a landslide. Most Israelis crave a father, a strong leader to guide us out of darkness. The fact that this person left such a mess behind him — a middle class without

jobs, a country in constant conflict, rising crime rate, bad education on all levels, corruption, unprecedented violence on the streets — doesn't make a difference. I look around and can't find a reasonable explanation. Riding on the bus recently, two tall, thin men stood up and asked the passengers to pray for Sharon's health. "Everybody loves him!" The first man said. "Show me one person who doesn't, I'll cut off his head." An old lady sitting next to me says she was always pro-Sharon, until he said we shouldn't be occupying another nation. Since then she hates him. Everybody has something to say, none of which

Letter from Israel

Father Knows Best

is rational. It's all about feelings. Most disturbing is the idea that Sharon was struck down by God. "Whenever a leader here starts a peace process of some sort, he's shot," People will say. "Sadat was shot. Then Rabin. Now Sharon, well, kinda." Students I teach cite an uncertain future as the reason they are reluctant to do anything about their life. They don't want to hear about the occupation, or the social situation. They have no solid ground to hold on to in order to talk about others. It is easier for everybody to discuss whether or not Sharon will live or die, or who will succeed him, rather than talk about the main issues that trouble Israeli society at the beginning of the 21st century.

Yoni Mishal teaches at the Beit Berl School of Fine Arts in Tel Aviv and is a photographer for Israel Indymedia.

International bankers demand debt repayment, more austerity

IMF Ignites Iraq Fuel Riots

BY A.K. GUPTA

The great failure of the armed Iraqi resistance has been its inability to forge a national struggle. The resistance to the U.S. occupation is bounded by religion, ethnicity and geography — in other words, Sunni Arabs concentrated in and around Baghdad and along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers west and north of the capital.

Where the guerrillas have failed, however, the IMF may succeed. On Dec. 23 the IMF announced a deal with the Iraqi transitional government for a \$685 million loan tied to "controlling" wages and pensions and redirecting "expenditures away from general subsidies."

With Iraqis trapped between a crushing occupation, home-grown death squads and pathological suicide bombers, the IMF thinks the proper salve is to slash food subsidies and increase fuel prices up to 20-fold.

The response was immediate after the first round of price hikes on Dec. 19 (interestingly enough, just days after nationwide elections). After prices on gasoline increased from 5 cents to 65 cents, large-scale protests broke out around the country. In many areas protesters blocked roads and besieged government offices. The southern city of Basra rescinded the hikes while in the Kurdish north, police shot dead four protesters on Jan. 1 after they torched cars and gasoline stations.

At the same time, many of the protests have tied the fuel increases to a lack of basic services and jobs. The government says it needs to raise fuel prices to the level of neighboring countries to discourage smuggling, to which the protesters respond then they should have jobs, electricity and water as in those countries, too.

The protests may be prelude to

even greater unrest if the Iraqi government moves to cut food subsidies by an initial 25 percent, according to Radio Free Europe reporter Kathleen Ridolfo.

The subsidy cuts and loans are all tied to a deal for Iraq to pay back 20 percent of \$40 billion owed to the "Paris Club" of 19 Western nations. No one expected Iraq to pay these loans back, but now it will be saddled with a debt burden equal to 30 percent of its gross domestic product of \$26 billion in 2004, as estimated by the European Union. (And only 30 percent of the \$40 billion is to be forgiven outright; the rest is contingent upon implementing the IMF "reforms.")

It seems like utter insanity: cutting food and raising energy prices on a battered and destitute population, which will now see precious earnings slip away to powerful banks while the U.S. occupation closes up shop on reconstruction.

Yet it's standard operating procedure for the IMF. When a country finds its house in economic disarray, the IMF shows up with a wrecking ball. It should be noted that as the United States has veto power within the finance body, the IMF is little more than a stalking horse for the U.S. Treasury Department and Western financial institutions.

Part of the IMF plan for Iraq is to "restructure" the state-banking industry, official speak for privatization, as well as to encourage the development of Iraq's petroleum resources (for the benefit of transnational oil companies, of course). But it may backfire in the end as Iraqis realize that whatever the promises of the Bush administration to end the military occupation, the economic one continues unabated.



Democracy Behind Bars in East Africa

Uganda Releases Opposition Leader; Ethiopian Dissidents Remains in Lock-Up

BY NEELA GHOSHAL

Just a year ago, the East African nation of Uganda was still a darling of the West, hailed as an African success story based on its economic growth and success in combating AIDS. How quickly things change, particularly in Africa, where Western governments tend to wear blinders when it comes to the dictatorial tendencies of their allies.

It came as no surprise to Ugandans when President Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, reversed constitutional term limits and announced his candidacy for a third term. And when opposition leader Dr. Kizza Besigye returned to Uganda in November after four years of self-imposed exile in South Africa, he knew the risks awaiting him. Besigye, leader of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party and Museveni's primary challenger in the 2001 presidential elections, left Uganda after a legal challenge to those election results proved unsuccessful, despite the Supreme Court's acknowledgement that electoral fraud had occurred.

Shortly after his return to Uganda, Besigye was arrested on treason and rape charges. The treason charges allege links with two rebel groups: the People's Redemption Army and the infamous Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda. In conjunction with both groups, Besigye is accused of plotting to overthrow the government. The complainant in the rape case is Joanita Kyakuwa, a university student Besigye allegedly assaulted while serving as her legal guardian in 1997.

On November 29, additional charges of terrorism and unlawful possession of firearms were filed before a General Court Martial.

Following a year in which numerous protests against Museveni's "presidency for life" have been shut down violently by police, Ugandans

are skeptical of the charges, and Britain and Sweden withdrew aid from Uganda's government — redirecting it to U.N. projects in northern Uganda — in response to the crackdown on the political opposition.

Apart from his promises to fight corruption and restore democracy, it is unclear quite what Besigye stands for. The FDC distinguishes itself from Museveni's National Resistance Movement by pledging to restore the two-term limit, resolve the conflict in the north through dialogue and negotiations, and end

"state terrorism and repression." Boldly (if not naively), FDC promises that within one year, all internally displaced Ugandans will be able to return home. Up to two million Ugandans are displaced, mostly due to the Lord's Resistance Army conflict in the north.

An opinion poll by the state-owned *Sunday Vision* in November showed Besigye ahead of Museveni among likely voters, while a *December Monitor* poll showed a slight lead for Museveni. Elections are scheduled for February 23.

ETHIOPIA

New School alum faces trumped-up treason charge

The Ethiopian government seems to be taking its cue from Museveni in jailing political opponents. One hundred and thirty-one journalists, civil society leaders, and members of the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) including New School alumnus Berhanu Nega were jailed in November on charges of sedition, high treason and genocide following protests in June and November against the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party. The protests were a response to May 2005 parliamentary elections, which the opposition claimed were rigged.

Ethiopian Minister of information Bereket Simon charged the opposition with fostering "strife between the different nationalities of Ethiopia which might have made the Rwandan genocide look like child's play," although to the outside observer, the protests scarcely appear genocidal. Under Ethiopian law, a person can be charged with genocide for "issuing propaganda against the state."

Nearly the entire leadership of the CUD is behind bars. At least 82 people died in the protests, most killed by Ethiopian police. According to United Press International, a staggering 40,000 Ethiopians civilians have been detained in conjunction with political protests since May. Five Ethiopian-born journalists based in the United States, employees of Voice of America, have also been charged in absentia with treason.

While the World Bank has stated it will withhold millions in budgetary support to Ethiopia due to its treatment of the opposition, the United States announced on Jan. 5 that it would not withhold aid. "Ethiopia is the only country in the Horn moving towards democracy and development," acting U.S. Ambassador Vicki Huddleston told reporters.

—NEELA GHOSHAL



Berhanu Nega PHOTO: ANDREW HEAVENS

Neocons Make U.N. Power Play

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.—The U.S. takeover of the United Nations approached a conclusion on Dec. 23 when the Bush administration blocked the implementation of the U.N.'s 2006–2007 budget. The U.S. insists the U.N. General Assembly approve a series of "reform" measures within the next few months. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was authorized to spend \$950 million for the first half of 2006. This was the first time in the history of the U.N. that a "cap" was imposed on its two-year budget. Total spending for the period was expected to be about \$3.8 billion.

Stafford Neil, the representative of Jamaica, which held the rotating chair of the Group of 77 developing countries and China, said that the introduction of "conditionalities through the control of the purse was a troubling tendency."

A call for U.N. reform received support following evidence presented by the Volcker Committee of mismanagement and corrup-

tion in the Iraq "oil-for-food" program, repeated incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse of women by U.N. peacekeepers, and the indiscretion of a top U.N. official who acknowledged to a television interviewer his fervent loyalty to President Bush.

Some proposed reforms would address management issues and shift authority from the General Assembly to the Secretary-General.

The latter proposals were disputed by developing countries; some questioned the role of Annan. One high-ranking Secretariat member characterized Annan as "the best Secretary-General the U.S. ever had."

As of Nov. 15, the United States owed the

United Nations \$1.3 billion. The United States continued to violate the U.N. charter and other international agreements with impunity — and with little reaction from the American public or the mass media.

The wrecking of the United Nations and multilateralism is the counterpoint of the Bush administration's destruction of U.S. constitutionalism and democracy.

Y.J. Choi of South Korea, chairman of the General Assembly's First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), said the human species needs a sense of its now tragic predicament if it is to escape the trap it is in. *Donald Paneth has covered the U.N. since 1946.*



PEACEKEEPER? The U.N. Stabilization Force in Haiti battles opponents of the U.S.-sponsored regime.



(left) Russian President Vladimir Putin and former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

The Great Gas Game

BY C.R. LEOPOLD

BOCHUM, Germany—Less than two months after being eased out of office, former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder accepted the chairmanship of the North European Gas Pipeline — of which 51 percent is owned by the Russian gas giant Gazprom and the remainder by two German companies. Outrage has been surprisingly muted in Germany, with the deal casting a new light on Schröder's seven years in power.

Schröder pushed hard for the pipeline and joined Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sept. 7 when the deal was inked — just 10 days before Germany's elections. Estimated to cost \$5.7 billion, the pipeline will connect the two countries along the Baltic seabed by bypassing pro-Western countries such as the Baltic states and Poland.

Leading German expert on corruption Jürgen Roth warns that Germany is now "vulnerable to extortion and blackmail as soon as a German government becomes dissatisfied for whatever reason with Putin's politics or if there should occur a massive conflict of interest."

In a move widely viewed as political revenge, Putin inaugurated the New Year by shutting down Gazprom's flow to Ukraine. Last year, the Ukraine elected U.S.-friendly Viktor Yushchenko — whom the Kremlin views as a CIA puppet as — president. Putin turned off the gas after the Ukraine refused to pay a 400 percent price hike demanded by Gazprom. Whereas Ukraine would be paying \$220 per thousand cubic meters for gas, Belarus, a notoriously corrupt and authoritarian government that remains loyal to Moscow, pays only \$47. The dispute is exemplary of Putin's strategy of using energy as a weapon.

The Russian government has a majority stake in Gazprom, which owns one-sixth of the world's gas reserves and is the leading supplier of natural gas to Western Europe. Along with many European nations, Germany imports more than a third of its gas from Gazprom.

Schröder's ardently warm relationship with an increasingly authoritarian Putin also raises questions. If real power lies in controlling the sources of European energy, then Schröder is now positioned to assist Putin in his plans to regain Russian regional dominance.

While Germans were outraged about their government's cooperation with the United States in the rendition of terrorism suspects to secret torture prisons in Eastern Europe, they seldom talk about Russian corruption, Russian "extraordinary rendition," Chechnya or mounting human rights abuses. The disappearance of a free press in Russia goes largely unnoted here. Russia recently passed a law giving the government control over NGOs and human rights organizations there, effectively emasculating the few organizations that have been monitoring Putin's creeping dictatorship.

A month ago, Putin sold a ballistic missile system to Iran. According to *Jane's Defense Weekly*, he is pouring munitions into Vietnam and China and opening weapons-producing factories on contract for China. Along with French President Dominique de Villepin, Putin wants the European Union's weapons embargo on China lifted immediately. He has also been securing deals to provide more energy to China.

Look for Schröder to try to align Germany more closely with Russia, China and Iran to form a counterweight against the U.S. and Britain as the "Great Game" continues.



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SUNDAY, JANUARY 29TH @ 7PM - \$5 sug.

Revolutionary Storytelling Series With Vincente "Panama" Alba

We are starting a new discussion series at Bluestockings. Born in Panama City and immigrating to the Bronx in 1961, Panama began his political activism in protest against the Vietnam war and joined the Young Lords Party in 1970. In 1977, Panama was arrested and spent six months in jail for alleged ties to Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN). Five years later, he was acquitted. Panama was involved in two takeovers of the Statue of Liberty as part of campaigns supporting Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners and in support of the people of Vieques. He is a founding member of numerous organizations, including: The South Bronx Clean Air Coalition, The Vieques Brigade, and The National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights. In 2004, he was awarded the El Award by El Diario-La Prensa. He is currently an executive board member and delegate of Laborers' Local 108 (L.I.U.N.A.) AFL/CIO.

MONDAY, JANUARY 30TH @ 7PM - FREE

Reading: Todd Gitlin "The Intellectuals And The Flag"

In the new book "The Intellectuals And The Flag," Todd Gitlin defends the comprehensive ambitions of an earlier generation of intellectuals, criticizes the academic left for abandoning real politics, and argues that an American patriotism coming from the political left would undermine the political right. Todd Gitlin is a professor of journalism and sociology at Columbia University, and the author of 11 books, including: *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*.

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Octavia Butler's conversation style is like her prose: lean and to the point. Not that she does not have a lot to talk about. She has written eleven novels including *Kindred*, whose heroine keeps falling back in time to save her white slave-master ancestor, and *Parable of the Sower*, a richly-imagined tale of a small band of survivors founding a new earth-centered religion in the midst of a post-apocalyptic America.

You can call it save the world fiction, but it clearly doesn't save anything," she says. "It just calls people's attention to the fact that so much needs to be done and obviously they are people who are running this country who don't care."

Winner of the Hugo Award for science fiction and a MacArthur Genius Fellowship, Butler's fiction bends the boundaries of race and gender, while focusing on the problems of pollution, the legacy of slavery, and racism. *The Independent* spoke with Butler, while she was on tour promoting *Fledgling*, her first novel in nearly a decade.



DAVID HOLLENBACH

Interviewing the Oracle: OCTAVIA BUTLER

INTERVIEW BY KAZEMBE BALAGUN

Q. What were some of your major influences in terms of decision to start writing science fiction?

A. I began reading science fiction before I was 12 and started writing science fiction around the same time. I was attracted to science fiction because it was so wide open. I was able to do anything and there were no walls to hem you in and there was no human condition that you were stopped from examining. Well, writing was what I wanted to do, it was always what I wanted to do. I had novels to write so I wrote them.

Q. You mention wide openness and I noticed in *Lilith's Brood* and your most recent novel *Fledgling* there a great concern with bending the constraints of gender, race and sexuality, as well as open relationships. Do you think polygamy is the future of humanity?

A. No, I think the future of humanity will be like the past, we'll do what we've always done and there will still be human beings. Granted, there will always be people doing something different and there are a lot of possibilities. I think my characters [Lauryen in *Parable of the Sower* and Shori Matthews in *Fledgling*] have communities that are important in their lives or build communities around themselves.

Q. Your novels deal with the past, future and present as one. Some have compared it to the concept of Sankofa "We look to the past to understand the present and prepare for the future." How do you see the concept of Sankofa playing in your work?

A. Well there's only one novel that remotely deals with that concept and that's *Kindred*. I was trying to make real the emotional reality of slavery. I was trying to make people feel more about the data they had learned. I wanted to make the past real and [show] how it scars the present.

Q. What's interesting to you on the literary scene at the moment?

A. I've been on the book tour for a few weeks, which means I haven't read anything more difficult than a newspaper (laughs) so I can't recommend anything in good conscience.

One of my favorite books is *Issac's Storm* by Erik Larson. It gives us a picture of the great storm that hit Galveston, Texas and gives us a picture of 1900. Also a book called *T-Rex and the Crater of Doom*, by Walter Alvarez. It's a history of the finding of the asteroid that killed off the dinosaurs. I like it because it shows more about how science is done than most books that you read about the subject. It's talks about how the way we think about science can become religious if we are not careful. There were people who were firmly entrenched in the belief that things can only happen one way, they found it difficult that it could happen another way.

Q. Do you see a tension between writing save the world type of fiction and the artistic impulses of the writer?

A. No, not at all. I have written books about making the world a better place and how to make humanity more survivable. While *Fledgling* is a different type of book, *The Parable* series serve as cautionary tales.

I wrote the Parable books because of the direction of the country. You can call it save the world fiction, but it clearly doesn't save anything. It just calls people's attention to the fact that so much needs to be done and obviously they are people who are running this country who don't care. I mean look at what the Congress is doing in terms of taking money away from every cause that is helping people who aren't very rich. Especially making it harder for people to get an education. Who would want to live in a world where there were fewer educated people?

Q. We're speaking at time of crisis in the country between the Iraq war and Katrina. As a writer what makes you hopeful for the future?

A. At the present, I feel so unhelpful. I recognize we will pay more attention when we have different leadership. I'm not exactly sure where that leadership will come from. But that doesn't mean I think we're all going down the toilet, I just don't see where that hope will come from. I think we need people with stronger ideals than John Kerry or Bill Clinton. I think we need people with more courage and vision. It's a shame we have had people who are so damn weak.

munity of humans called symbionts, a very model of group marriage. Think *Interview with a Vampire* meets *The Ethical Slut*.

Indeed, Shori's amnesia allows Butler to deal with the problem of memory and tradition, how we can create the new while maintaining the old. While *Fledgling* is a departure from the political musings found in *Parable of the Sower* and *Talents*, Butler's trademark ability to place past, present and future in the same place is on display. The author's creative powers are in full bloom, as she still has the abilities to pile darkness upon the reader, only to allow the final light of self-discovery. —K.B.

The New Tradition of Speculative Fiction

Octavia Butler is in the long tradition of writers who blend science fiction and resistance politics. Surprising to some, the progressive tradition in science fiction dates back to the 19th century. Here are some of the highlights.

Blake, Martin Delaney: Delaney was an antislavery orator and editor when he published *Blake*, or *Huts of America* in 1862. The central character is Henirco Blacus a runaway slave who becomes Blake, a leader of a slave rebellion to overthrow the Cuban government and use the island as a base area for ending slavery throughout the Americas. Written some years before John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry and, the novel was a stark contrast to the pacifist leanings of many in the antislavery movement.

Herland, Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Before the personal became political, Gilman wrote this short 1915 novel on what a feminist republic would look like. Filled with wonder and irony, this funny tale challenged many to rethink what civilization is and what free women could do.

Looking Backward 1887-2000, Edward Bellamy: The 21st Century was the subject of speculation from the futurists in Russia to "The Jetsons" in the 1960s. For Bellamy, in *Looking Backward*, in 2000 America is a socialist republic where war, famine and cash are eliminated. Written in the vain of reform novelists like Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair, Bellamy's work is seen as naïve in light of the advent of the Soviet police state.

The Dispossessed, Ursula K. LeGuin: Shevek is a middle-aged inhabitant of a desolate anarchist utopia. He is also the greatest theoretical physicist in the nine known worlds of LeGuin's Hainish Universe. In *The Dispossessed*, he becomes the first person from his society in over a century to return to the powerful mother planet and unexpectedly lights the fires of change in both worlds. LeGuin uses his journey to subtly compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of both anarchism and capitalism as well as to explore time, space, love, fidelity and the struggle to reconcile individual freedom and collective responsibility.

—KAZEMBE BALAGUN

THE BLACK VAMPIRE AWAKES

FLEDGLING

By Octavia Butler
SEVEN STORIES PRESS, OCTOBER 2005

In her new novel *Fledgling*, Octavia Butler has turned tradition on its head by presenting a black female as a vampire. Genetically modified to be able to stay awake during the day, Shori Matthews is in a race to regain her memory before her community of vampires is destroyed. On the way, she creates her own com-

Mr. Spielberg Goes to Munich

MUNICH
DIR. STEVEN SPIELBERG

As the least Spielbergian film ever made by Steven Spielberg, *Munich* comes as a both a welcome surprise and a slight disappointment – an appropriately conflicted experience. Spielberg has long struggled in his adult movies to reflect a world more gray than black-and-white, with his more recent films showing progress towards this realization. With *Munich*, film's most successful director has made his most emotionally conflicted and morally complex work, reflecting an American sensibility more Robert Altman than Frank Capra. There's an understated power to this political thriller, which is nonetheless undermined by the suffocating aspirations of the well-intentioned.

Munich details the aftermath of the massacre of Israeli athletes by Palenstians at the 1972 Olympic Games, focusing on a group of five Mossad agents covertly assembled to hunt down those thought to be responsible. Instead of developing each of the agent characters, Spielberg and his screenwriters Eric Roth and (in a prestige-garnering rewrite) Tony Kushner focus exclusively on their leader Avner (Eric Bana) as he wrestles with how their assignment muddles the distance between the political and the moral. The other four team members figure more as different voices arguing in Avner's head, with Carl (Ciaran Hinds) offering sympathy for the Palestinian point of view. The story alternates between these arguments and the assassinations of the hunted, a stop and go that prevents the film from ever achieving narrative momentum.

But this lack of momentum solidifies the film's major point: the mission has no real end, as revenge begets revenge, bloodshed begets bloodshed. Spielberg suppresses his natural directorial instincts, denying the comforts of storytelling to explore the aimlessness of retribution. The assassinations are quick, brutal and generally disastrous, lacking the storyboarded grace of Spielberg's usual action scenes. The film's violence feels both inexplicable and inevitable.

Yet, beyond an opening sequence where the Munich debacle abstractly



Eric Drooker, New York



Amitai Sandy, Tel Aviv



Suleiman Mansour, Ramallah

When the Wall Comes Tumbling Down

BY PAUL BUHLE

In a world of rampant globalism from above, real artistic collaboration from below remains all too rare. Collaboration across the usual lines of division in the Middle East is especially important, and the catalogue of "Three Cities Against the Wall" exemplifies a vital contribution to our understanding. Not only of the so-called Security Wall being constructed in the West Bank, against the judgments of the World Court and the views of nearly all nations, of course, but against the symbolism of nationalistic walls, race and ethnic ghetto walls and other inherently exclusionary symbols of power and domination.

This work brings together mainly Americans, Israelis and Palestinians. It arises out of work done with the International Solidarity Movement, and out of art lessons being offered by New Yorker Seth Tobocman to the children of a village just outside Ramallah. The project grew with the ardent participation of Israelis against the war-breeding madness of continued occupation, of Palestinians seeking to have their cause heard and of progressive artists in New York.

The showing of the exhibit was itself a political act, as might be expected. The notion of Palestinians and Israelis joining in a show, even in a crucial common cause, was not easily accepted. Israeli artists were placed under various restraints, sometimes arrested, for wanting to visit the scene of the walls as artists, that is, neither Israeli soldiers nor settlers.

As Tobocman recalls in the introduction, the difficulty of the process was itself enlightening as well as demanding, and created a bond among those who gave time, energy and put up with lots of frustration. Art like this is never officially welcomed.

An introductory essay by Lin Dhalozin-Dovrat, an Israeli peacenik and teacher, goes right to the heart of the Wall as a monstrous art object. Its normalization, its banalization of the unendurable supplies a fantasy of Palestinian disappearance: You don't see them and therefore they don't exist. It is the gate of the gated suburb, with electric shocks and broken glass warning away the restless and resentful, also the

SHOW: 3 CITIES AGAINST THE WALL
VOXPOP
2005

romantic. Like those suburban gates, it represents prison walls disguised as something else, something ordinary.

Against this prospect, a global exhibition like this one, says Dhalzin-Dovrat, foreshadows "an institution that does not yet exist," an "affinity to the global opposition in the rest of the world" against the builders of the wall. Not, of course, because they are Jewish; indeed, the exhibition is in part an appeal to a Jewishness that has been allowed to forget itself.

Hasan el-Batal, the third introducer, adds the wise Israeli saying that an uprooted Palestinian olive tree is also a menorah turned upside down, a provocation and violation. Artists respond, because they must, and no matter whether they are reviewed in the *New York Times* or not.

More than a hundred pages of color offer such a plethora of stunning works that summarization is impossible. A digital photo by Terry Berkowitz placing the Warsaw Ghetto wall against the new wall has an extraordinary effect of recalling all of twentieth century Jewish history. Facing this page we find, in Christopher Cardinale's creation, a soldier with his weapon overseeing the wall with a potential victim behind every small section, as he looks upon the Mount of Olives. And so it goes, with cartoons, photos, sculpture photographed, graffiti, mostly accompanied by the artist's own vivid text. Amitai Sandy's "Yes! I fuck with an Arab!" a photo of herself and boyfriend, answering the curses shouted at Jewish women peace demonstrators ("You fuck with Arabs").

If peace can emerge, if artists can contribute significantly to the process, then we might find the crucial images here. Alissa Solomon, in one of the vivid postscripts, notes that the traditional American tour to "the Holy Land" for generations (and not only for Jews: my minister-uncle made the trip with his flock regularly) climaxed with the Wailing Wall, now finds itself at the Security Wall. We pass from sanctity to blasphemy in but a few miles. But perhaps only for now. At least this art points to other possible futures.

Paul Buble is coeditor, with Nicole Schulman, of *Wobblies! A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Verso), and a Yiddishist.

unfolds on televisions across the globe, this overly literal film suffers from a lack of evocative imagery.

And the scenes of political discussion reveal that this is undoubtedly a Spielberg film by telegraphing every thought in the script, as if we need all viewpoints clearly spelled out. This tendency to overstate and oversell what is already clear, as if seeking our approval, reaches its apex in a regrettable sequence at the end, where Spielberg crosscuts a sex scene with the Olympic massacre (including the most ridiculous shot of any film this year). At this stage in his career, Spielberg should have the confidence not to film scenes that echo Sally Field's infamous Oscar speech: trust us Steven, we like you, we really really like you.

—CHARLIE BASS

MUNICH'S MESSAGE: Only Israelis Are Human

Munich is intended for mass audiences who know nothing about the facts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is exactly why it will work, and why it will deliver the (propaganda) goods. It reminds me of a line that George Carlin used to use in his comedy routine and went roughly like this: "why do 'we' call Israeli terrorists commandos, and we call Palestinian commandos terror-

ists?" That line never got a laugh the two times I saw him use it with a live audience. The thrust of the Spielberg movie is simple, fanfare notwithstanding: Israeli killers are conscientious and humane people, while Palestinians are always – no matter what – killers.

—BY AS'AD ABUKHALIL
Excerpted from *angryarab.blogspot.com*.



Fundamentalism & the Law

CONTEMPT: HOW THE RIGHT IS WRONGING AMERICAN JUSTICE
BY CATHERINE CRIER
RUGGED LAND, 2005

Catherine Crier is a former Texas judge, a conservative Republican and a self-characterized “independent with some libertarian leanings.” And boy, she is angry as a Texas rattler! Her timely new work, *Contempt: How the Right Is Wronging American Justice*, is a hard-hitting indictment of those who would use religion — specifically fundamentalist Christianity — to advance a political agenda that, in her view, would eviscerate vital legal protections. She also postulates that should the current fundamentalist attacks on the federal judiciary continue to advance, our Constitution-based, secular government will be reduced to a theocracy.

Crier sets the stage for her thesis by focusing on two judges — Florida’s George Greer and Alabama’s Roy Moore. Greer, a devout Baptist and religious conservative, was the judge in charge of the Terri Schiavo case who quietly endured death threats while steadfastly applying the law. Judge Moore, designer of the Ten Commandments sculpture installed in his courtroom, defied a district court by refusing to remove the monument and was later stripped of his chief justice designation by an Alabama ethics panel. Moore’s cause was taken up by a sharply divided Congress, which voted against using federal funds to remove the monument, despite the finding by the federal courts that its presence in Moore’s courtroom was unconstitutional.

Greer has since faded into the Florida background, while Moore is a leading gubernatorial candidate. Moore also assisted in the drafting of the Constitution Restoration Act, which would strip the courts of jurisdiction to hear any case involving the acknowledgement of God by public officials and which calls for the impeachment of judges who ignore it. Moore has said, “Tyranny is putting ourselves above God, and our federal courts and the Supreme Court have done exactly that.” Moore and the extreme right have a plan to put things right.

That plan consists of characterizing judges who do not support their worldview as “activist,” and accusing them of straying from the “original intent” of the Constitution. Once identified, these judges are subject to attack in the press, from the pulpit and by the executive and legislative branches of government.

Public attack and derision is only the first step. According to Crier, the right has more extreme methods of destroying the independent judiciary. Impeachment is the current favorite with House Republicans proposing a congress-

sional task force to review federal judicial decisions for evidence of “abuse.” Term limits, jurisdiction stripping, direct congressional veto, removal of funding and even the abolition of courts and/or federal judicial districts have been proposed. If all else fails to intimidate judges, their courts will be eliminated, making a mockery of the Constitution’s purpose — to “establish justice” — by depriving Americans of a place to seek it.

Crier effectively punctures the liberal “activist” judge appellation as it is applied to the Supreme Court by noting that the Rehnquist court struck down more federal laws than any other in history. The right is fond of advocating the impeachment of judicial activists, but, as Crier notes, there has been no hue and cry for the impeachment of Justices Scalia or Thomas, who have each voted to strike down more federal laws than six of their colleagues.

While this work is far from perfect, Crier’s down-to-earth style will appeal to a wide audience of readers

who may ordinarily shy away from a work about the law. Her examination of the founders’ deist beliefs and their effects on the writing of the Constitution and on the early formation of our republic is particularly informative. Crier shines as she puts the lie to the right’s attempts to rewrite this history.

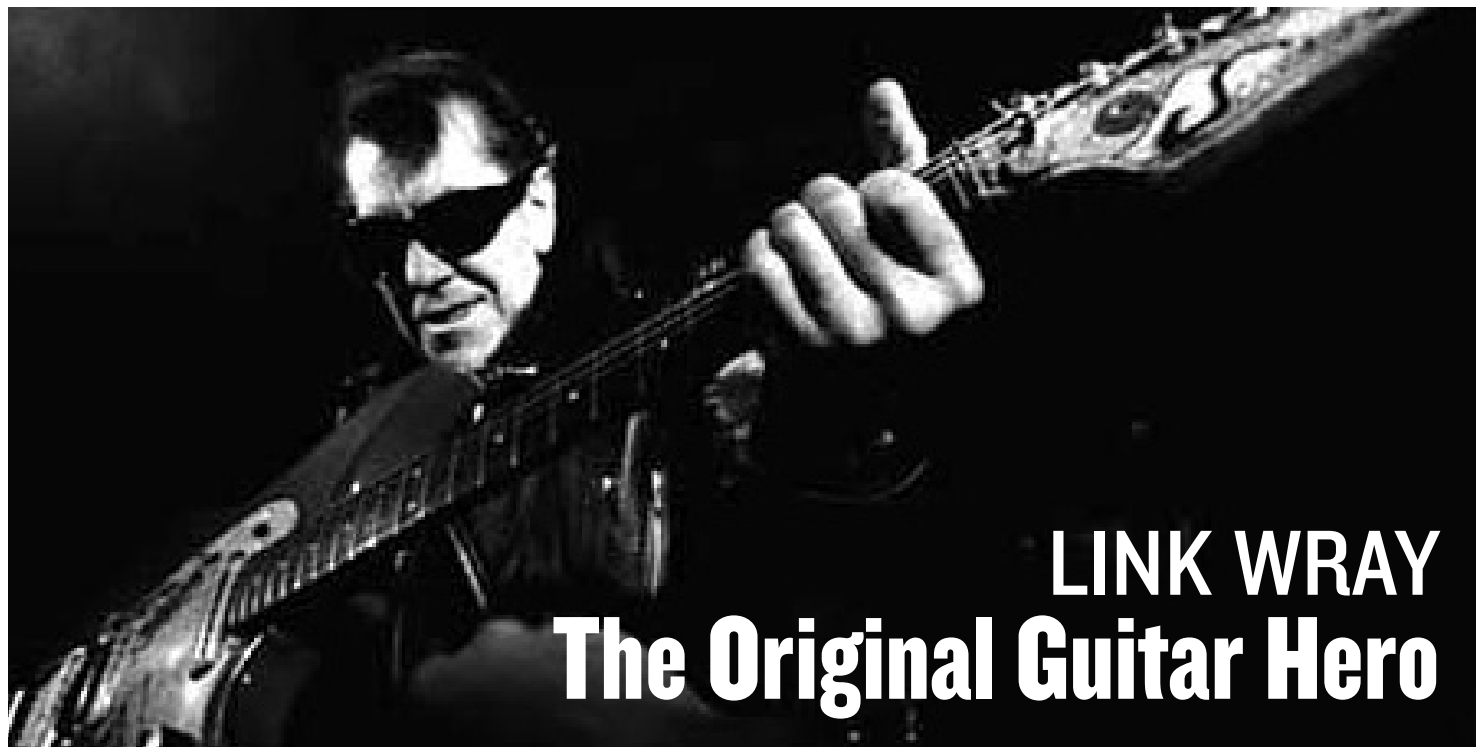
—STEVE KNOWLTON

Exposing Empire

IMPERIAL AMBITIONS
NOAM CHOMSKY AND
DAVID BARSAMIAN
METROPOLITAN BOOKS, 2005

Noam Chomsky analyzes U.S. foreign policy with a hammer. Academic critics on both right and left chide him for the crudeness of his political state-

The String



LINK WRAY The Original Guitar Hero

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Distortion is an essential part of the modern electric-guitar sound. Amplifiers are designed to produce it, and there’s a whole arena of tone-grunging effects out there, from generically named “Overdrive” pedals to the Tube Screamer, the Experience, and the Death Metal, not to mention the Big Muff Pi, the Super Hard On, and the Soda Meiser.

It wasn’t always that way. Guitar distortion was discovered largely by accident. On March 5, 1951, Ike Turner’s band was driving from Mississippi to Memphis, on the way to a session at Sun Studios, when the amp lashed to the car roof fell off, breaking the speaker cone. They improvised a repair by stuffing newspaper into the speaker frame, and the result was a buzzy, distorted tone — and a number-one R&B hit, “Rocket 88,” that is sometimes considered the first rock ‘n’ roll record ever. Five years later in Nashville, a loose tube in guitarist Paul Burlison’s amp created a similar sound on Johnny Burnette’s rockabilly classic “Train Kept A-Rollin’.”

Credit for the first intentional use of distortion on a record, however, belongs to guitarist Link Wray, who died Nov. 5 at the age of 76. A Pawnee Indian born in North Carolina, Wray started out as a country singer, switched to rock ‘n’ roll after he heard Elvis Presley, and then switched to doing mostly instrumentals after he lost a lung to tuberculosis. In 1958, Wray was recording a tune he’d improvised on a gig in Fredericksburg, Va., a mutant blues based on a crunching, stroll-tempo power-chord riff — two Ds and an E that hung in the air and rippled with ominous tremolo — but the tone he was getting from his amp was too clean, so he punched holes in the tweeter with a pencil. “You’re just screwing up your amp,” his brother Doug, the producer, admonished. “Who cares, as long as we get a fuckin’ sound!” Wray replied.

Titled *Rumble*, the record sold a million copies and reached #16 on the charts. But Wray didn’t fit major-label marketing concepts. His best work came in the ‘60s, when he was gigging mainly in rowdy Washington bars. Aided by Doug, who had a studio in DC and later in rural Maryland, Link cut dozens

of records for the tiny Swan label — raw, revved-up rockers like “Ace of Spades” and “Big City After Dark,” the eerie “The Shadow Knows,” and a scorching vocal version of Howlin’ Wolf’s “Hidden Charms.”

Like most ‘50s-rooted rockers, Wray’s career fell off in the hippie era, although he recorded several albums of quieter material and also developed a taste for Hendrixistic excesses. In 1977, he hooked up with punk-rockabilly singer Robert Gordon, but the biggest boost to his fortunes came in 1994, when “Rumble” was included on the soundtrack of *Pulp Fiction*. Most of his material got reissued (the best overviews are the *Mr. Guitar* double CD on Norton and *Rumble! The Best of Link Wray on Rhino*), and he kept touring well into his 70s.

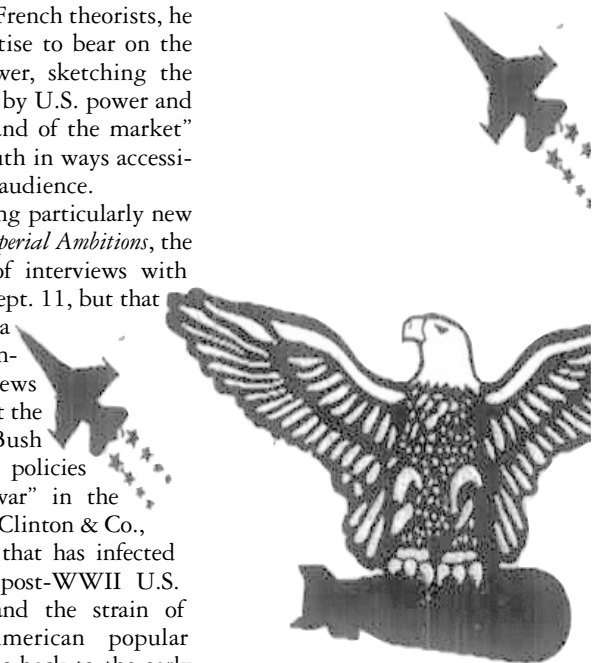
Link Wray created a guitar sound and vocabulary that paved the way from the speeded-up blues licks of ‘50s rock to the future furies of Pete Townsend and Ivy Rorschach, and his records are a testament to the joys of loud, crazed guitar noise packed into a driving, concise tune. “Who cares, as long as we get a fuckin’ sound!”

ments, but imperialism is crude. While Chomsky has a tendency to portray politics as simple, perhaps simpler than it actually is, he does so to bring out the dark underbelly of U.S. power. Instead of long methodological discussions or lifting jargon from French theorists, he brings his expertise to bear on the workings of power, sketching the brutal face worn by U.S. power and the “invisible hand of the market” in the global South in ways accessible to a popular audience.

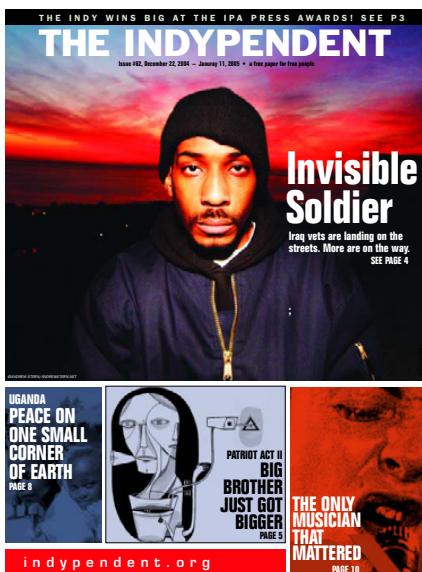
There is nothing particularly new to be found in *Imperial Ambitions*, the first collection of interviews with Chomsky since Sept. 11, but that is the point. In a series of clear, concise interviews Chomsky lays out the roots of the Bush Administration’s policies of “preventive war” in the foreign policy of Clinton & Co., the imperialism that has infected the entirety of post-WWII U.S. foreign policy and the strain of paranoia in American popular thought that runs back to the early

colonialists’ fear of the “merciless savages.” Chomsky is precisely the kind of critical intellectual that a genuine democracy needs; *Imperial Ambitions* shows just how far the United States is from being one.

—MATT WASSERMAN



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“If this were a dictatorship, it’d be a heck of a lot easier... just so long as I’m the dictator.”

—George W. Bush, December 18, 2000, CNN

As 2006 begins, we seem to be at a not completely unfamiliar crossroads in the long history of the American imperial presidency. It grew up, shedding presidential constraints, in the post-World War II years as part of the rise of the national security state and the military-industrial complex. It reached its unconstitutional apogee with Richard Nixon’s presidency and what became known as the Watergate scandal – an event marked by Nixon’s attempt to create his own private national security apparatus, which he directed to secretly commit various high crimes and misdemeanors for him. It was as close as we came – until now – to a presidential coup d’etat that might functionally have abrogated the Constitution.

In those years, the potential dangers of an unfettered presidency (so apparent to the nation’s founding fathers) became obvious to a great many Americans. As now, a failed war helped drag the president’s plans down and Nixon’s reign ended in personal disgrace and resignation, as well as in a brief resurgence of congressional oversight activity. All this held in check the imperial presidency – for a time.

The Bad News Crew

Under George Bush, Dick Cheney and their assorted advisers, acolytes and zealots, a virtual cult of unconstrained presidential power has been constructed, centered around the figure of Bush himself. For these cultists of an all-powerful presidency, the holy war, the “crusade” to be embarked upon was, above all, aimed at creating a president accountable to no one, overseen by no one, and restricted by no other force or power. And so, in this White House, all roads have led back to one issue: How to press ever harder at the weakening boundaries of presidential power. This is why,

A Cult of Presidential Power

BY TOM ENGELHARDT

when critics concentrate on any specific issue or set of administration acts, no matter how egregious or significant, they invariably miss the point. The issue it turns out, is never primarily torture or warrantless surveillance, to take just two areas of potentially illegal administration activity. Though each of them had value and importance to top administration officials, they were nonetheless primarily the means to an end.

This is why the announcement of the “global war on terror” almost immediately after the Sept. 11 attacks was so important. It was to be a “war” without end. No one ever attempted to define what “victory” might actually consist of, though we were assured that the war itself would, like the Cold War, last generations.

Even the recent presidential

announcement that we will now settle only for “complete victory” in Iraq lays out, in this context, a distinctly limited goal because Iraq has already been defined as but a single “theater” in a larger war on terror. A war without end, of course, left the president as a commander-in-chief-without-end, and it was in such a guise that the acolytes of that “obscure philosophy” of total presidential power planned to claim their “inherent” constitutional right to do essentially anything.

Pushing the limits

Having established their global war on terror, and so their “war powers,” in the fall of 2001, top administration officials then moved remarkably quickly to the outer limits of power – by plunging into the issue of torture. After all, if you can establish a presidential right to

order torture (no matter how you manage to redefine it) as well as to hold captives under a category of warfare dredged up from the legal dustbin of history in prisons especially established to be beyond the reach of the law or the oversight of anyone but those under your command, you’ve established a presidential right to do just about anything imaginable. While the get-tough aura of torture may indeed have appealed to some of these worshippers of power, what undoubtedly appealed to them most was the moving of the presidential goal posts, the changing of the rules. From Abu Ghraib on, the results of all this have been obvious enough, but one crucial aspect of such unfettered presidential power goes regularly unmentioned. As you push the limits, wherever they may be, to create a situation in which all con-

trol rests in your hands, the odds are that you will create an uncontrollable situation as well.

Evil unleashed

From torture to spying, such acts, however contained they may initially appear to be, involve a deep plunge into a dark and perverse pool of human emotions. Torture in particular, but also unlimited forms of surveillance and any other acts that secretly invest individuals with something like the powers of gods, invariably lead to humanity’s darkest side. The permission to commit such acts, once released into the world, mutates and spreads like wildfire from top to bottom in any command structure and across all boundaries. You may start out with a relatively small program of secret imprisonment, torture, spying or whatever meant to achieve limited

goals while establishing certain prerogatives of power, but in no case is the situation likely to remain that way for long.

This was, perhaps, the true genius of the American system as imagined by its founders – the understanding that any form of state power left unchecked in the hands of a single person or group of people was likely to degenerate into despotism (or worse), whatever the initial desires of the individuals involved. In his Dec. 19 news conference defending his NSA program, the president took umbrage when a reporter asked:

“I wonder if you can tell us today, sir, what, if any, limits you believe there are or should be on the powers of a president during a war, at wartime? And if the global war on terror is going to last for decades, as has been forecast, does that mean

that we’re going to see, therefore, a more or less permanent expansion of the unchecked power of the executive in American society?”

“To say ‘unchecked power,’” responded an irritated Bush, “basically is ascribing some kind of dictatorial position to the president, which I strongly reject.”

How the nation handles this crossroads moment will tell us much about whether or not “some kind of dictatorial position” for our imperial, imperious, and impervious president will be in the American grain for a long, long time to come.

Tom Engelhardt is co-founder of the American Empire Project and author of The End of Victory Culture, a history of American triumphalism in the Cold War. A longer version of this article originally appeared on tomdispatch.com.

THE PEOPLE’S LAWYER

The BoSS is Back

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

Suspension of constitutional liberties in the name of national security and the “war on terror” is fashionable not only in Washington, D.C., but right here in our city.

National Lawyers Guild member Eileen Clancy, founder of I-Witness Video caught on film ten officers attending rallies and bike events undercover over the past 16 months. The story made Page 1 of the Dec. 22 New York Times. It’s not a far step to guess that the police were infiltrating peace and activist groups, too. They have a long history of doing so.

Back in the bad old days there was the Bureau of Special Services (BoSS, aka the Red Squad), the largest of all the past century’s domestic surveillance programs, with a collection of 1.2 million index cards, files, photos and films on 250,000 people, dating back to 1904.

BoSS actively questioned teachers, neighbors, landlords, family members and employers about activists, sometimes getting them fired or evicted. It kept track of all “groups that because of their conduct or rhetoric may pose a threat to life, property, or governmental administration;” of “malcontents;” and of any activity likely to result in “a serious police problem.”

Like the FBI, it used the covert methods of informants, infiltrators, wiretaps and electronic bugs. They successfully fomented paranoia in the Black power movement, the Young Lords and the burgeoning women’s movement, debilitating their organizing activities and undermining the movement. Their files were shared with other cities and provided to right-wing intelligence groups such as “National Goals Inc.,” part of a network of private counter-subversion groups that spy on progressive dissidents and then demand investigation of their activities.

The dimensions of the local domestic spying were exposed by the 1971 Handschu lawsuit, which resulted in a federal decree prohibiting the NYPD from investigating any individual or group without specific information of criminal intent. However, the full record of BoSS’s crimes against political organization and expression may never be known, because in response to Handschu’s file access provision, the NYPD deliberately dumped its files into a room at 1 Police Plaza where they told the court it would now take “41.5 man years” to reorganize.

The Handschu Decree was dissolved in 2003 after the city claimed that it was “simply unworkable in the context of terror-



WATCHING YOU: NYPD films demonstrators in Times Square during August 2004 protests at the Republican National Convention. PHOTO: Antrim Caskey

ism.” A compromise was reached where the police still agreed to abide by constitutional standards that protect free speech. But the ink was barely dry on the compromise when the NYPD began issuing its own rules that negated the settlement. For instance, in October 2004, NYPD announced it had the right to maintain files and film of peaceful protests “for training purposes.”

Litigation will continue before Judge Charles Haight, who issued the original consent decree. But the matter should not be left to the courts. The NYCLU has called for city council oversight hearings. We should demand that all use of undercover cops and infiltration stop, and that all tapes from peaceful demonstrations be destroyed. Otherwise, we may get what we deserve.

In the words of Judge Peter McQuillan who presided over one of this city’s most egregious trials during the early 1970s, “A ubiquitous secret police and an obsequious society go hand in hand.”

The People’s Lawyer is a project of the Nat’l Lawyers Guild, NYC Chapter. Contact the chapter at www.nlgny.org or at (212) 679-6018.

the g-string

Alito’s Laws in Your Draw’rs

BY AMY WOLF

The extreme right has fought for the right to torture me, to spy on me without warrant, and to take away my right to govern my own body. Privacy has come under attack in the United States and so will *Roe v. Wade* if Samuel Alito is confirmed as a Supreme Court justice.

Alito has and will continue to carry out a reactionary moral vision. He has ruled that women do not have a right to make their own decisions about their bodies without a husband’s consent, and in 1985, he stated that the Constitution does not protect a woman’s right to obtain an abortion.

The rise in teen pregnancy and STD infections among young women, which are a direct result of federal abstinence-only programs, has taught me that if I engage in premarital sex I deserve what’s coming to me. If I am underage, I could be forced to get court or parental approval before getting an abortion. This could dissuade me from getting an abortion, or this scarlet letter pinning will enshroud me in shame and guilt. Either way, the far right will press its agenda through stripping away my privacy rights. It is easier to criminalize acts that are

shrouded in shame and easier to take away the rights of those perceived as criminals.

Roe v. Wade was grounded in the Fourth Amendment and its protections of personal privacy. It was an extension of other rulings that protect the right to refuse medical treatment and the freedom to resist government search and seizure. In 1891, the Supreme Court ruled that, “No right is held more sacred... than the right of every individual to the possession and control of his own person, free from all restraint or interference of others.”

Right now, the Supreme Court is deciding whether to hear an appeal of the decisions on the Partial Birth Abortion Ban. This ban was signed into law by President Bush in 2003 as a gesture to the religious right. This ban has been blocked through lawsuits citing its unconstitutional lack of exception for woman’s health or severe fetal abnormalities. The appeal (*Gonzales v. Carhart*) could come before Alito if he is confirmed. If the appeal is successful and the ban is implemented, it will set a legal precedent for future restriction on *Roe v. Wade*.

The fight to block Alito’s nomination will only be successful if opposition focuses on his devotion to the extreme right and its far-reaching, repressive agenda.



BRIAN LIGHTBODY

History Repeats Itself in NSA Spy Scandal

BY MIKE BURKE

In early February, Congress is expected to hold hearings to examine whether President Bush broke the law when he ordered the National Security Agency to conduct domestic spy operations inside the United States.

New reports show that the Pentagon and FBI spied on Greenpeace, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and Catholic Worker as well as anti-war protesters.

In December, NBC News obtained a secret military intelligence database that included information on over 40 anti-war and anti-nuclear protests that took place between November 2004 and May 2005. Nine of the protests took place in the

New York region between November 2004 and May 2005, including counter-recruiting demonstrations at New York University, City College, SUNY-Albany, Southern Connecticut State University and William Patterson University in Wayne, NJ.

According to *The Washington Post*, the Pentagon has also pushed legislation on Capitol Hill to create an intelligence exception to the Privacy Act, to allow the FBI and others to “share information gathered about U.S. citizens with the Pentagon, CIA and other intelligence agencies, as long as the data is deemed to be related to foreign intelligence.”

“We are deputizing the military to spy on law-abiding Americans in America,” warned Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) in an interview with the Washington Post. “This is a huge leap without even a [congressional] hearing.”

Newly released documents also show the FBI and its Joint Terrorism Task Forces have monitored and infiltrated several non-violent activist groups.

At the Indiana University, the FBI monitored a “Vegan Community Project.” At the Stanford University, the FBI obtained the contact of list of students who attended a 2002 conference opposed to the U.S. sanc-

tions against Iraq. Other documents suggest the FBI placed interns at PETA to carry out surveillance on the animal rights group. Another document says the Catholic Worker movement “advocated peace with a Christian and semi-communistic ideology.”

“Labeling law abiding groups and their members ‘domestic terrorists’ is not only irresponsible, it has a chilling effect on the vibrant tradition of political dissent in this country,” said Ann Beeson, Associate Legal Director of the ACLU.

Questions are now also being raised over what the National Security Agency has done with the intelligence that it obtained under President Bush’s order. According to the Post, the NSA has turned over information to the Defense Intelligence Agency, FBI, CIA and Department of Homeland Security.

Is this history repeating itself? In the 1960s and 1970s the U.S. government used NSA intercepts in its massive campaign against the black nationalist, American Indian, Chicano and anti-war movements.

In order to prevent future such abuses Congress passed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 requiring all domestic spy operations be approved by the secret FISA court.

The law came out of Senate hearings led by Sen. Frank Church (D-ID). Church

Stand Up for Your Rights!

The daily drumbeat of news can be overwhelming—torture, illegal spying, surveillance, PATRIOT ACT reauthorization, etc. However, there are still many groups both local and nationally that are standing up and fighting for their rights and our rights. Here are a few of them:

American Civil Liberties Union
[aclu.org](#)
Center for Constitutional Rights
[ccr-ny.org](#)
Central B’klyn Community Cop Watch
718-254-8800 ill [mxgm.org](#)

Center for Reproductive Rights
[crfp.org](#)
Electronic Frontier Foundation
[eff.org](#)
I-Witness Video
[lwitnessvideo.info](#)
National Police Accountability Project
617-277-6015 ill [nlg-npap.org](#)
National Security Archive
[gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/](#)
New York Civil Liberties Union
[nyclu.org](#) or [nycbordc.org](#)
Planned Parenthood
[plannedparenthood.org](#)

warned in 1975: “We have a particular obligation to examine the NSA, in light of its tremendous potential for abuse. . . . The interception of international communications signals sent through the air is the job of NSA; and, thanks to modern technological developments, it does its job very well. The danger lies in the ability of the NSA to turn its awesome technology against domestic communications.”

Now a generation later, Congress is preparing for a new round of hearings over the NSA turning against domestic communications.

Russell Tice, who worked as an NSA intelligence agent, up until May 2005, has already asked to testify before Congress at these hearings.

“It is with my oath as a US intelligence officer weighing heavy on my mind that I wish to report to Congress acts that I believe are unlawful and unconstitutional,” Tice said. “The freedom of the American people cannot be protected when our constitutional liberties are ignored and our nation has decayed into a police state.”